

GROWTH-ACTION GROUPS ADDRESS ECO-JUSTICE:
OVERCOMING RESISTANCE TO GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY
IN AMERICAN PROTESTANT CHURCHES

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ABSTRACT

It is the purpose of this project to call the Christian community to respond to the present eco-justice crisis. In these pages the author has intended to establish a biblical theological basis for such a response, to begin defining the resistances individuals commonly have to such involvement, and to document some of the crises presently facing the globe in the areas of ecology and justice.

Based on this background, this project attempts to define a possible group model, the Growth-Action group, which might be used in churches as a means for Christians 1) to explore the biblical material as it relates to social justice and the stewardship of the earth, 2) to become informed about present failures to achieve a just and sustainable society, 3) to pinpoint and hopefully grow through the resistances which so often prevent active response, 4) to RESPOND meaningfully to some identified problem(s).

Resources are offered to aid in the formation and function of the Growth-Action group.

The author hopes that the information herein will educate and stimulate the reader, giving her/him a useful resource for Christian social action response. It is especially hoped that this writing will add to the good of humankind, leading to some deeper reverence and active care for God and all God's creatures and creation!

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

The Christian community frequently resists its calling to seek a just and sustainable society.

Thesis

Growth-Action groups could be used to clarify persons' potentials as change agents, and to formulate and initiate action toward a just and sustainable society.

Importance of this problem

The problem being dealt with here is the same problem which has plagued humankind throughout the millenia of recorded history. The problem is that persons are called by God to treat one another as they wish to be treated, but often fail to do so.

There is a great deal of similarity between the early Israelite prophets' cries against the powerful and for the weak, and the cries we hear now against powerful organizations and for the oppressed. But there is also a great deal of difference.

The principal ethic of justice and equity has remained the same, and we must take to heart the words of Jesus as he quoted from Isaiah, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has annointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim

release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4:18-19) This ethic has remained, but the world has changed. The world today is facing some historically unprecedented problems. Increasingly scientists, economists, and others with a vision of a just and sustainable society fear that the world is approaching the brink of environmental, economic and moral disaster. There are those who cry doom and gloom in every generation, but the following facts should begin to point out that the current situation is indeed critical: never before have resources been consumed at the alarming rate they are today. Never before have there been so many people who are chronically unemployed. Never before has there been such uncontrolled population growth. Never before have so many been undernourished. Never has technology so robbed humankind of creativity and nurture, exchanging them for toxic chemicals, unsound agricultural practices and absurd mechanization.

In addition, people of all ages, consciously or unconsciously, seem to know that present societies are decayed morally: witness the plethora of self-help groups and the raging fires of evangelical religion. Yet, in the American Protestant churches of today the majority response is paralysis. Where else, if not in the Christian church, can one look to God to empower persons and set solid moral and societal goals before them? Yet many are stumbling in the task of addressing present problems, or worse, are not even standing up! The church cannot remain the church if it remains a supporter of the status quo and forfeits its prophetic role. Some denominations at the national level are gaining increased influence in social issues, but

the majority of individual congregations remain silent. The world will not survive in anything like its created form unless Christians and other like-minded groups act soon to turn away (repent) from this collision course with nature and with one another.

One must not become further paralyzed in analyzing the "why's" of present immobility in the face of the great numbers of oppressed people and the rampant disregard of the environment. What Christians in particular are more importantly called to do is to find the power to lift God's people out of their lethargy into active commitment to a prophetic vision of justice and sustainability. This power is God's, but to put this power to use Christians must first find the sustenance which will replace a deep, spiritual hunger, a hunger which makes helping others difficult if not impossible. That sustenance also comes from God. In addition, concerned leaders must stop holding up visions of doom without enabling the discovery of alternatives solutions, sources of HOPE.

This writer believes that the churches can call on counseling insights for small groups to help renew their people spiritually, to open them to the fire of the Holy Spirit, and to empower them to act out of love for their fellow human beings, IN THANKS TO GOD.

Several changes would take place in such a spiritual renewal. Participants would find healthier ways of coping with their lives, so that less energy would be spent on "spinning wheels" emotionally, that is, the energy wasted on unhealthy ways of functioning would be used for new growth. Such a change, when it occurred, would begin a cycle of transformation and new hope; it would open individuals to seeing, and seeking, new possibilities. Simultaneously, attention would be

given to awareness of God's Spirit working in the group and in individual lives. It is important, crucial, that Christians rediscover God's centrality in their lives and their dependence on prayer, fellowship and action. This "vertical dimension" expands one's horizons and hopes, it is the well out of which one draws one's deepest experiences and insights into what the kingdom of God means, here and now.

The important change which would accompany individual growth would be a greater commitment to community growth, where the community ultimately to be dealt with is the global community. The outward thrust would be motivated by a sense of gratefulness and hope which arises out of a renewed sense of well-being, as well as from increased awareness that one is linked with every other living thing as part of God's creation. The direction of the outward concern should be guided by the biblical record, as it reveals the divine vision of justice and love which applies to all people. Urgent personal motivation and practical direction should be gained from informed study of present injustices and poor environmental stewardship. It may be necessary to begin with poverty and injustice at home because: 1) those suffering in the local community are part of the oppressed world, and 2) exposure to poverty and environmental abuse often raises awareness and deepens commitment more than any amount of study. Once this awareness is awakened, it is time to tackle the broader issues which threaten the welfare of the earth and of the life upon it.

Such commitments are going to require substantial value changes and subsequent changes in life habits of many members of the group. Some may find this too much of a task and leave the group,

but the group itself should be a powerful source of support and strength for others who would not be able to make such a commitment alone.

Many attempts made presently within the church to involve its people in commitment to global justice are meeting with strong resistance. This resistance seems to be brought about by the high threat which such involvement poses for middle-class American Christians. The threat may be to one's job, lifestyle, value assumptions or ability to cope with already pressing personal problems. Often it is intensified by one's feeling that the church has been a haven against change. Each person perceives it differently. The aim of this study is to reach defineable understandings of the present global course, and to find ways in which Christians can discover renewed power to meet the challenges which presently threaten the future of the human spirit and of this planet, Earth.

Definition of terms

The portion of the international Christian community referred to in this project is the American, Protestant, predominantly white, middle-class church. Although the discussion must in some way be pertinent to all Christians, the particular aim here is to focus on that part of the worldwide community defined above. The writer is most familiar with this segment of the church at present, and with the attempts which have been made in such churches to address global issues.

Resistance refers to the various methods by which Christians continue to avoid change, especially the kind of change which involves commitment to world development and a just and sustainable society.

This resistance includes such avoidance statements as: "What good can I do (the problems are so big)?", "I don't have the time", "But WE HAVE DONE so much for these countries already", "We need to help our own first", "Who says we have to be responsible for them?", "Why should I give up what I have worked for?", "I want Scriptural reasons"...

The term global responsibility assumes that each and every human is linked to the well being of the globe, and therefore carries some responsibility for the actions of his or her life as these actions affect all of life. Today more than ever before the world is circled by networks of trade, travel and communication. The impact of technological and social activities on world climates, as well as on the biological death of rivers and lakes and the spread of the desert is increasingly evident. The United Nations reports that 650,000 square kilometers of farm and range land have turned to waste along the southern edge of the Sahara in the last fifty years, primarily due to irresponsible land use and management.¹ Indeed, Thor Heyerdahl predicts the impending death of the oceans due to the use of them as waste disposal systems! Many observers also see now that colonization and its attendant oppression are not only politically based, but have been continued on the economic level after many colonial countries gained their independence. The remaining economic systems still function, depriving the former colony of cheap labor, resources and produce. Hence, the General Assembly of the United Nations included in its declaration for a new international economic order the need to seek

¹Gamini Seneviratne, "The Desert is Man," Development Forum, V (October 1977), 8.

after fair prices and open markets for the exports of the poor nations.² The United States has played a significant role in the continuation of such oppression through unfair pricing and closed markets. Assuming the Christian ethic of care for God's creation and mutual justice in all relationships, global responsibility then becomes the responsibility of each Christian to actively live out this ethic in every part of life.

The term eco-justice, or just and sustainable society, involves two parts. A just society is one in which each person benefits from the fruits of her or his own labor, one in which each person can live with the basic necessities of life, can experience acceptance, and can in some measure have control over his or her own future. Justice means that the few do not benefit vastly from the labors of the many. It ultimately means living by these words: "So whatever you wish that people would do to you, do so to them." (Matt. 7:12) Richard Dickinson includes the following in his definition of just development: physical and material necessities, adequate educational and cultural opportunities, and movement toward economic equity.³ In sum, justice means that all people have an equal opportunity to develop their potentialities.

A sustainable society is one which depends primarily on the consumption of goods within the capacity to renew them and use them with minimal environmental damage; it depends minimally on

²Arthur Simon, Bread for the World (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), p. 68.

³Richard Dickinson, Line and Plumb (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968), p. 42.

non-renewable resources, and as much as possible it reclaims discarded materials. Such a society should be able to sustain itself indefinitely. These are the necessary goals toward sustainability as seen by Kenneth Boulding.⁴ Sustainability means that what one does to sustain oneself could be done by everyone, everywhere, forever.⁵

The term Growth-Action groups refers to small groups of Christians gathered together 1) to explore their own needs for growth, especially as these needs relate to (or add to) oppression or environmental degradation in the global community, and 2) to develop a theology and strategy which leads to action aimed at achieving necessary change in these problem areas. As with the commonly known "growth groups", the purpose of the group is to release the latent resources of the members.⁶ The results of such a group should be personal change, a more constructive way of dealing with life for the individual involved, and a desire to pass this blessing of healing on to those who are suffering as well as into greater care for the earth. Such groups would use growth counseling activities, would develop a theology about justice and sustainability, and would learn about global problems, exploring and acting on solutions. At all times, the

⁴Thomas P. Fenton, Education for Justice (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1975), p. 165.

⁵C. Dean Freudenberger, "Toward a U.S. Food and Farm Policy in Context of an Impoverished Humanity and Threatened Biosphere," (December 1976).

⁶Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., The People Dynamic (New York: Harper Row, 1972), p. 4.

individual and global-communal aspects of growth should be visibly inter-related.⁷

Moral decay cannot be fully described here, but in part it may be observed presently in the disintegration of the family unit; in the high rate of divorce; in rampant disregard for anything other than one's own advancement and accumulation of goods; in high unemployment and the great disparity between the rich and the poor; in cultural, racial and economic oppression; in a constantly growing separation from the spiritual, affective, and ethical aspects of faith. "The moral crisis is expressed in an unwillingness to share, greed to have and possess wealth and power, self-centeredness which creates injustices and oppression."⁸

Scope and limitations

This project will raise some of the major issues of global concern, particularly those which need immediate and forward-looking proposals; those which impinge deeply on the right of millions of men, women and children to have daily food, shelter and work; and issues which threaten the health and stability of the biosphere. Such issues will be related to the biblical message, and therefore also to Christian action and life habits.

Resistances to social change in the American Protestant, white middle-class church will be reviewed, and proposals set forth

⁷ Ibid., p. 148.

⁸ Richard Dickinson, To Set at Liberty the Oppressed (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1975), p. 112.

for overcoming these resistances in small group work. In this way individuals may be growing while also helping to correct the wrongs presently done to the poor and to the environment, often times because of greed, prejudice and technological "progress."

The writer will then bring together what is here discussed to form exercises for the Growth-Action group. These exercises will be designed primarily for adult Growth-Action groups which will be led by two trained, informed persons, one layperson and one minister.

Limitations

Not all Christian churches will be addressed, because the author cannot presume to speak accurately for poor and nonwhite churches. It is still hoped, however, that these groups might also find useful information and resources here.

This project will not spell out which issues should receive top priority in the church program. Priorities of need among the issues are constantly changing, and the ability to meet particular needs will vary from church to church.

People outside the church will not be addressed. Though it is important for the churches to be reaching into the secular community with the Christian faith, and while this model might be adapted for such use, these adaptations cannot be detailed here.

Last, but far from least, education for children cannot be covered in the scope of this writing. But, the author is acutely aware of the importance of training young people in the ethics of a just and sustainable society. Pastors, educators, and parents are encouraged to explore the ways in which awareness of justice and love

may be raised up in the child's environment and nurtured in a form adapted to the maturity of the child. The relationship of the Growth-Action group to preaching, teaching, worship and outreach will only briefly be discussed.

Work done in the field

A number of good resource books have been written which discuss eco-justice. Barbara Ward is responsible for two books in the area of environmental sustainability. Only One Earth (1972), co-authored by Rene Dubos,⁹ attempts to get some perspective from a global viewpoint of the impact of human activity over the long term. These writers see the problem of environmental degradation at a crisis point:

In short, the two worlds of man--the biosphere of his inheritance and the technosphere of his creation--are out of balance, indeed potentially in deep conflict. And man is in the middle. This is the hinge of history at which we stand, the door of the future opening onto a crisis more sudden, more global, more inescapable and more bewildering than any ever encountered by the human species, and one which will take decisive shape within the lifespan of the children who are already born.¹⁰

In Who Speaks for Earth? (1973), Ward presents the speeches addressed to a symposium on the environment of seven world citizens who are specialists in their fields of environmental science, among them Thor Heyerdahl who will be quoted later in this writing.¹¹

⁹Barbara Ward and Rene Dubos, Only One Earth (New York: Norton, 1972).

¹⁰Ibid, p. 12.

¹¹Barbara Ward et al., Who Speaks for Earth? (New York: Norton, 1973).

An older book, but one which adds greatly to the present perspective, is The Care of the Earth (1962) by Russell Lord.¹² Here the author not only discusses modern agricultural trends with criticism (some of which needs now to be updated), but also gives needed insight to the social and environmental effects of these trends by digging into history and revealing what has happened to past cultures which ignored the value of people and land.

Wendell Berry has picked up on a similar wholistic view of life and has reflected on American society and agriculture with vision and judgment. His book, The Unsettling of America (1977), is a prophetic statement on these issues.¹³

Much has been written on justice in the biblical literature including many prophecies and commandments. The following passages are but two examples:

...if you feed the hungry from your own plenty and satisfy the needs of the wretched, then your light will rise like dawn out of darkness and your dusk be like noonday... (Isaiah 58:10)

But if a [person] has enough to live on, and yet when [she] he sees another in need shuts up his [her] heart against [that one], how can it be said that the divine love dwells in [her] him? (1 John 3:17)

In contemporary writing, Pope Paul began to bring more attention to the need for justice in 1967 with his statement on The Development of Peoples, or Populorum Progressio.¹⁴ His awarenesses have since been expanded upon and deepened by Richard Dickinson's Line

¹²Russell Lord, The Care of the Earth (New York: Nelson, 1962).

¹³Wendell Berry, The Unsettling of America (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1977).

¹⁴Pope Paul, Populorum Progressio, (1967).

and Plummet (1968),¹⁵ by a Third World writer Paulo Freire in Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970),¹⁶ and by Charles Elliot on The Development Debate (1971).¹⁷ More recently the Nairobi Conference of the World Council of Churches in 1975 produced Breaking Barriers (David Paton, ed.),¹⁸ and Richard Dickinson updated his earlier work in To Set at the Oppressed (1975).¹⁹ In this book he concludes that there are three crises facing the present age.

The present crisis is expressed in our satisfaction with dream for universal humanity which are too small, too parochial and too material. That reflects in our refusal to believe and act in the capacity and intent of God to make all things new, partially through faithful men and women. The moral crisis is expressed in an unwillingness to share, greed to have and possess wealth and power, self-centeredness which creates injustices and oppression. The knowledge crisis is that we stand on new frontiers. Even with the purest good will, even with stubborn faith, we do not know how--in terms of social organizations, technically and so on--to avoid many problems and achieve many dreams.²⁰

In 1976 C. Dean Freudenberger and Paul Minus wrote Christian Responsibility in a Hungry World. This is a useful handbook for churches as they address eco-justice and theology.²¹ Ronald Sider

¹⁵Dickinson, Line and Plummet.

¹⁶Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).

¹⁷Charles Elliot, The Development Debate (New York: Friendship Press, 1971).

¹⁸David M. Paton (ed.) Breaking Barriers, Nairobi 1975 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976).

¹⁹Dickinson, To Set at Liberty the Oppressed.

²⁰Ibid., P. 112.

²¹C. Dean Freudenberger and Paul Minus, Christian Responsibility in a Hungry World (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976).

has searched particularly the Scriptures for a biblical base for the message of justice, resulting in his book Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger (1977).²²

There are also a number of books which reflect on the use of groups in the church for growth or social action, usually written from experience. Wayne Oates wrote an early work in this field titled Pastoral Counseling in Social Problems (1966),²³ followed by Dieter Hessel's A Social Action Primer (1972),²⁴ both useful books. On the personal growth side, in that same year Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., wrote The People Dynamic,²⁵ describing the human potential released for self and others when one is helped to grow through group work.

The new life-power produced in groups must be hooked to action for social change. Growth groups need not be used as psychological fiddling while the world burns. They can contribute to a people-serving society by generating a robust sense of social responsibility. Because they can combine growth and action objectives, growth groups can constitute a major resource for social change.²⁶

The rapid growth and spread of more self-centered, self-help therapies in the early 1970's led to a reaction by some who said that persons were being taught to see no further than their own reflection. This led to Edwin Schur's The Awareness Trap (1976), a warning against overdoses of self-awareness.

²²Ronald Sider, Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1977).

²³Wayne Oates, Pastoral Counseling in Social Problems (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966).

²⁴Dieter T. Hessel, A Social Action Primer (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972).

²⁵Clinebell, The People Dynamic.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 148.

Only a leisure class can afford to devote so much time, energy and money to self-exploration... the 'new consciousness' has itself become a commodity.... While the movement provides middle-class consumers with an attractive new product, attention is diverted from the more serious social problems that plague our society--poverty, racism, environmental decay, crime, widespread corporate and governmental fraud.²⁷

Likewise the feminist movement saw that personal awareness was not enough. "From the personal to the political" became a central theme in their philosophy, as is pointed out in Guidelines to Feminist Consciousness Raising by Harriet Perl and Gay Abarbanell (1976).²⁸

Without theory about growth groups, but with much experience in the Church of the Savior in Washington, D.C., Elizabeth O'Connor wrote The New Community in which she reflected on the importance of actual involvement for continued Christian growth and commitment to change.²⁹

Two books come closer than any so far discussed to bridging the gap between understanding eco-justice issues and their relationship with personal growth and action. Harvey Seifert and Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., co-authored Personal Growth and Social Change (1969)³⁰ in which they brought together their knowledge of the social action and counseling fields, aware that neither outward commitment nor inner growth occurs very effectively without the other. Because social

²⁷ Edwin Schur, The Awareness Trap (New York: New York Times, 1976), p. 7.

²⁸ Harriet Perl and Gay Abarbanell, Guidelines to Feminist Consciousness Raising (Los Angeles: GA and HP, 1976).

²⁹ Elizabeth O'Connor, The New Community (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).

³⁰ Harvey Seifert and Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Personal Growth and Social Change (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969).

problems breed individual problems and individual problems collectively feed and undergird social problems, "It is clear that both the focus on helping individuals and the focus on working to change person-damaging social conditions are indispensable aspects of the mission of the church."³¹

These insights for personal growth and general action strategies are complemented by Thomas Fenton's Education for Justice (1975). Fenton reflects on the world crisis (especially the justice issue) and has collected from many sources exercises for groups which are aimed at raising problem awareness on specific present topics and at strategizing approaches to those problems. His vision of education for justice is seen in this statement:

In their document Justice for the World the Roman Synod of bishops stated that education for justice will 'awaken a critical sense, which will lead us to reflect on the society in which we live and on its values: it will make [us] ready to renounce these values when they cease to promote justice for all.' With an allegiance only to the gospel of Christ, we are free to be critical of causes, of U.S. business interests, and of U.S. foreign policy, if we judge them to be in conflict with the promotion of justice for all men and women.³²

The purpose of this writing is to further the synthesis between personal growth and social responsibility, and to heighten the understanding that neither personal growth nor social responsibility is significantly attained without the other. The aim here is to define a clearer and more consistent model for global consciousness raising and commitment.

³¹Ibid., p. 13f.

³²Fenton, p. 15.

Methodology

Much of the information in this writing is taken from reading research. This information is brought together from the areas of global problems and counseling insights, as well as from those writings which in some way have sought to bridge the two. Additional material comes from some ethical writings and from the Bible.

The personal experience of the writer and of others in the local church provides background for defining the resistances faced in the church when addressing global questions, as well as possible solutions. Specifically, the writer will draw this information from the results of Project Burning Bush, a project (1975-1978) started at the School of Theology at Claremont, designed for the specific purpose of reconciling personal growth and social responsibility to their natural unity.

Reflection on and evaluation of these resources will be the basis for the construction of the new model of growth and action for local church groups.

Outline of the project

The purpose of chapter two is to lay some theological (i.e., biblical) groundwork for all that is to follow, for to be the people of God and attempt to understand God's vision for life, the church must begin with God's word. In addition, a lack of a theological basis for global concern is a major cause of resistance to involvement among church members.

Chapter three begins to define some of the resistances which have prevented many projects aimed at social change, especially global

change, from achieving any part of their goal. It is felt that without understanding of these resistances and some methods to overcome them (Chapter 6), no significant change can occur.

The reader's attention is focussed on a few crucial and illustrative problems in the fourth chapter. These problems are seen as being illustrative of many others needing immediate attention because of their locally acute or globally endangering nature. These aspects of the present crises are possible "spring-boards" for Growth-Action group study and action.

Chapter five presents a general outline of the nature of a Growth-Action group. The principles are culled from insights of group leaders who have attempted in one way or another to achieve growth and/or social action through small church groups.

Chapter six aims to offer exercises which reflect the previous learnings, exercises especially designed to reduce the resistances in light of theological understandings and problem awareness.

Chapter seven is a summary statement of the entire project and a statement of conclusions.

It is certainly the feeling of this writer that the church should be involved in issues which threaten the welfare of many women, men and children through injustice and the misuse of God's earth. The people of God are called to see the world in radical ways, and to act out of that radicalism. They are called to judge life by God's standards and to be faithful to no other creed or ideology. Too often such an outlook has been perceived only as one of loss, of giving up material goods, letting go of old ways, losing social acceptability. It is important to remember that these losses will be replaced by deeper meanings, by acceptability before God, by new identity which

which is unthreatened by "moth" or "rust." The explorations of the Growth-Action group into personal and political changes could be compared with those of the consciousness-raising model: it is rather like "shaking a kaleidoscope and watching all the same pieces re-arrange themselves into an altogether other picture, one that makes the color and shape of each piece appear startlingly new and alive, and full of unexpected meaning."³³

Let the church nevermore play an "insignificant leadership role" in forming ethical awareness! Let it rather be the birthplace in Spirit of persons who will see and hear pain and joy, startlingly new and alive and full of unexpected meaning!

³³Clifford Sager and Singer Kaplan (eds.), Progress in Group and Family Therapy (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1972), p. 803.



Chapter 2

THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDINGS

I. Introduction

It may seem strange, given the problem context of this paper, to branch off into theology at the very outset. And while theological understandings cannot be central to the scope of this writing, they are central to the Christian faith and to the way in which any church approaches ministry to its community and to the world. Unless the undertakings of a congregation are founded on the bedrock of God's love and guidance, they are bound to flounder in the shifting sands of this complex and changing world. Charles Elliot points his readers to this need for serious theologizing. "Perhaps one of the greatest blasphemies the church daily offers its founder is to believe that it can somehow transcend the tough thinking of the technocrat and perceive levels of moral truth denied to others by making a token intellectual nod at the complexity of the real world."¹

Not only is sound theology an "ought"--it is also something from which the church in general, and small groups in particular will benefit, as they come to realize that the challenge and affirmation of their loyalty to God also means that God has a stake in the outcome of that group!²

¹Charles Elliot, The Development Debate (New York: Friendship Press, 1971), p. 79.

²Robert C. Leslie, "Uniqueness of Small Groups," Pastoral Psychology, XV: 145 (June 1964), 37.

"Theology, faith, give us broader perspective which attempts to deal with ultimate reality. Around this center we can organize our lives and make decisions in areas which are not directly religious, but which certainly have moral elements."³ This awakening to ultimate reality is perhaps more necessary today than it has ever been, because human endeavor in the fields of science has tempted men and women of the so-called "developed world" to forget their need of God and replace it with longing after the latest new products. Part of prophetic (and pastoral) ministry is to help persons separate theology from idolatry, and then to begin a search of re-evaluation for their lives.

The world into which we are born is full of stories, images, symbols which become dominating objects of love and loyalty; they are internalized gods. This internalization of gods shapes the way in which we see the world, think about it, and respond to it. "Who we are and are becoming as a result of the faith we hold determines in large part what we see"--i.e., how we interpret and value the events of life.⁴

If the Growth-Action group and the church are to deal with their relationships with both the world and God in their wholeness--as one--then they must de-compartmentalize their lives. They must close what Wendell Berry calls the geologic fault between the physical world of the body (through which persons of the developed world daily destroy

³Harvey Seifert and Howard Clinebell, Jr., Personal Growth and Social Change (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 248.

⁴Bruce C. Birch and Larry L. Rasmussen, The Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976), pp. 87-88.

part of the earth's treasure), and the spiritual world (which is supposed to be "free" of earthly contaminants). As Berry accurately observes, the Bible is the handbook of the interaction of the two, body and spirit.⁵

This theological presentation is hardly exhaustive, but the writer offers it as an outline, a springboard for GA group use. It is meant to provide guidance, awareness and encouragement to the group as individuals encounter their own resistances and as the group encounters tough social issues.⁶

II. Justice and Sustainability

Often, if not always, it takes the perspective of the oppressed to bring to light an issue of injustice which the dominant group cannot, or does not wish to, see. A letter from a Central American Christian group brought attention to I Kings 21 in relation to the Panama Canal treaties.⁷ The point they raise which is of use here is not primarily the Panama Canal situation, but the passage and what it says.

Ahab the king wanted Naboth's vineyard for his own convenience. When Naboth declined to sell it, Ahab was vexed. Jezebel, his wife, schemed to have Naboth killed in order to gain his property, and she did so. But the word of the Lord came to Elijah, sending him to curse

⁵Wendell Berry, The Unsettling of America (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1977), pp. 108-9.

⁶See Appendix A for a more complete collection of Scripture passages related to the scope of this work.

⁷"Letter from Central America," International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, San Jose, Costa Rica. Sojourners, (November 1977), 9.

Ahab for selling himself to do this evil (through Jezebel). It was only when he humbled himself and sought forgiveness that God forgave Ahab.

The names and faces today are different, and we recognize that temptation to sin comes through men as well as women, but the message is still clear. It is an act of injustice for the rich to take away the land of the poor.

The Exodus theme is repeated again and again throughout the Old Testament: God hears the "groaning of the people of Israel" under the burdens and bondage of the Egyptians and promises to deliver them. (See Exodus 6:5-7, 20:2, Deut. 5:6) Moreover, God does deliver Israel, but such deliverance does not mean that Israel herself is free of judgment. "Again and again it is declared that God would destroy Israel because of both its idolatry and its mistreatment of the poor."⁸ It must be seen from the clear support for, and then rejection of, Israel by God that God's primary interest was, and is, the administration of justice, and that those who break faith with this principle shall themselves be broken.

In the prophets, and again in the ministry of Jesus, God's concern for justice, that is, care for the poor and of all in need, becomes increasingly clear.

Thus says the Lord:

'For three transgressions of Israel
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment;
because they sell the righteous for silver,
and the needy for a pair of shoes--
they that trample the head of the poor into the dust
of the earth,
and turn aside the way of the afflicted...' (Amos 2:6-7)

⁸ Ronald J. Sider, Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger (Downers Grove, Il: Intervarsity Press, 1977), p. 135.

'They hate him who reproves in the gate,
 and they abhor him who speaks the truth.
 Therefore, because you trample upon the poor
 and take from them exactions of wheat,
 you have built your houses of hewn stone,
 but you shall not dwell in them;
 you have planted pleasant vineyards,
 but you shall not drink their wine.
 For I know how many are your sins--
 you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe,
 and turn aside the needy at the gate...

Hate evil, and love good,
 and establish justice in the gate...' (Amos 5:10-15)

Some questions which must be asked as these questions are reflected upon for today are: Where are the poor and powerless being sold like items so that the powerful may buy "shoes" or whatever else? Where are beautiful homes and pleasant vineyards the fruit gained off the backs of the poor for "exactions of wheat?" Who has the courage to withstand the hatred of the oppressor when she/he speaks the truth?

In the next passage, fasting might be understood as referring to the religious practices, special offerings, and so on, of the people. The Lord says that the people seek God, asking why God does not see their fasting, God replies that it is because in the day of fast they pursue their own business and oppress their workers, they fast, yet quarrel and fight "with wicked fist." God says that the fast God chooses is for all to humble themselves:

'Is this not the fast that I choose:
 to loose the bonds of wickedness,
 to undo the thongs of the yoke,
 to let the oppressed go free...
 ...to share your bread with the hungry,
 and bring the homeless poor into your house...?' (Isa. 58:3-7)

If the people do this, the Lord says, they shall call, and God shall say "Here I am" and shall guide, nourish, and rebuild the people.

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
 because [God] has annointed me to preach good news to the

poor.
 [God] has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and
 the recovering of sight to the blind,
 to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
 to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.' (Luke 4:18-19)

These passages concerning justice are but the tip of the iceberg, but they give the reader a beginning of a vision of God's desires for the care of the poor, the oppressed, the weak.

Another ethic to be addressed in this paper, and therefore here, is the ethic of sustainability. Because this issue is one which came to being long since the last Scriptural writings, questions about pollution, resource use, land degradation are not addressed specifically; but the spirit of several passages can be applied to these and other such current problems. What does the Bible say about all of creation, about land use, about possessions which presently put enormous demands on resources and environment?

First of all, and perhaps most importantly, Genesis tells the story of each new creation of God, which God saw was good, and of the last creation, that of woman and man, whom God called to be fruitful and multiply, to subdue the earth and have dominion over it. God saw that all of this was good. God gave humans the freedom to take care of, to rule over the earth. But does such care-taking allow for abuse of the land, water and air? Does it assume that the intricate balances of nature, cyclical and therefore sometimes problematic as they may be, can be improved upon by the use of poisons in agriculture? While this writer cannot answer these questions categorically, such questions and many others should be raised and struggled with in Christian circles. The God granted right of humans to rule over the earth includes responsibility for the earth.

In Leviticus 25, the Lord gives the people ordinances concerning the care and distribution of the land:

'in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the Lord; you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard...
...And you shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants; it shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to your property.' (Lev. 25:4, 10)

The Lord goes on to say in verses 25ff. that if one becomes poor and sells his/her land and cannot buy it back, after fifty years it shall be returned to her/him. By doing these ordinances, God says, the people shall dwell in the land securely, and it will yield its fruit, enough to fill the people.

This is a brief, but very significant note, concerned in part with what is called "crop rotation", the purpose of which is to maintain soil fertility. It seems reasonable, then, to expand the understanding of this passage to mean that other practices, too, which are known to sustain soil fertility should also be followed and should be understood as "doing the ordinances" of the Lord, in order that the land may yield its fruit and the people may be full. The justice of land redistribution is clear enough and needs no comment!

Finally, Jesus teaches his followers to take a carefree attitude toward possessions.⁹ He says, "You cannot serve God and mammon." He tells the people not to lay up treasures on earth, but in heaven. He himself chose a life of relative poverty, and spent most of his time in poor Galilee.¹⁰ If the rich third of the world,

⁹Ibid., p. 177.

¹⁰Ronald J. Sider, "Is God Really on the Side of the Poor?" Sojourners, VI (October 1977).

which especially includes most Americans (and many Christians!) took steps to care less about possessions and to acquire fewer goods, the present problem of sustainability would be greatly reduced. At the same time, the other emphasis of Leviticus 25 and of Jesus' teaching would be greatly increased, that is, obedience to God would become much more central in one's life.

III. Call for Action

"Being and doing are intimately related in the Bible and in us. First we must ask, Who am I to be?, then, What shall I do?"¹¹

This dilemma is seen in the story of Moses as he asks God in Exodus 3 and 4, ..."Who am I that I should go to the Pharaoh, and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" Moses has many excuses for not being able to do this task, but God repeatedly reminds him that God is the Lord of all, God made the human mouth and will show Moses how to convince Pharaoh that he is indeed God's messenger. Once again, although there is judgment against Moses for resisting the call, there is also God's love promising support and guidance to those who will follow the Creator's will. If Moses, Rachel, Ruth, Jesus, and so many others before and since had not answered the call of God by going and doing, they would not have been faithful. So today, Christians are being called in old and new ways to answer that call. Who are we? What shall we do?

One of the richest resources for discovering the answers to these questions is the ability to perceive a prophetic vision.

¹¹Birch and Rasmussen, pp. 167-8.

John Hutchison describes the prophetic principle as "the achievement of a point above all human life and culture from which all of life is held under radical criticism." He goes on to say that the prophetic movement of Judaism began in a time of apparent calm, prosperity prevailed, but at the cost of the grinding poverty of the poor.¹² It takes no deep hermeneutic to see that this same prophetic principle, indeed, the same "apparent calm", could be applied to today's world.

The Christian community needs, through the deepening of its transcendent relationship with God, to find that point above all daily affairs from which they can be held in radical divine criticism, and to discover in what ways this criticism finds the rich prospering at the cost of the grinding poverty of the poor majority. Who are we? What are we called to do?

Very often the prophetic principle has called for radical changes, specifically, for a fundamental change of heart. In Ezekiel 36:22f. Ezekiel proclaims that God will cleanse the people, giving them a new heart, a heart of flesh in place of the heart of stone. A similar message is found in Jeremiah 31:31f. Today men and women have more to deal with than just a human spirit regarding this change of heart, for human minds, through the developments of science, have carried the capacity for good and evil far beyond what it was even one hundred years ago. As Toynbee has clearly stated: "the necessary condition for making technology bear fruit that will be sweet and not

¹²John A. Hutchison, Paths of Faith (New York: McGraw Hill, 1969), pp. 348; 350.

bitter is a spiritual change of heart."¹³ It is easy for moral courage to fade in the shadow of this technology and its attendant powers.

But Ezekiel again gives hope, in Chapter 37 God shows the prophet a valley of dry bones and asks if these dry bones can live. Ezekiel responds, "O Lord, God, thou knowest." And God does know. The Lord proceeds to put sinews on those bones and brings them to life! So, God says, will it be with the broken house of Israel. Likewise, today, as Dieter Hessel says, "The new is being planned and built amid styles and institutions that may not yet be dead, but are perceived as hollow."¹⁴

It is the Christian's task, in light of the prophetic principle, to perceive the hollow, dry bones and prepare the people for God's bringing in of new life.

Jesus called the people of God to follow him. As we all know, this journey led him to a cross that sharpened more keenly the visions of justice, and the prophetic principle. A member of the Third World, Juan Mateos, sees this more clearly than comfortable Christians can:

The cross of Jesus is the radical condemnation of an unjust world. (Gal. 6:4) There is no escape from the cross; you have to stay with the one crucified, or stand with the crucifiers; there is no middle way. All that God values is hated and killed by the world, and what the world esteems, God abhors. Through Jesus, God offered the world equality, solidarity and mutual help, freedom, love, life and happiness with God... domination, violence, injustice, the religious and civil power, the ruling class and the people seeking

¹³Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., The People Dynamic (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 162.

¹⁴Dieter T. Hessel, A Social Action Primer (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), p. 59.

their security in institutions hate life and give death. They prefer Caesar for king. 'John 19:15)¹⁵

Whom do we prefer for king? How do we answer the call? Who are we, then?

IV. The Struggle with Oneself

...a poor man came into my office and asked me for five dollars. He was drinking. He had no food, no job, no home. The Christ of the poor confronted me in this man. But I didn't have the time, I said. I had to prepare a lecture on the Christian view of poverty. To be sure, I did give him a couple of dollars, but that was not what he needed. He needed somebody to talk to, somebody to love him. He needed my time. He needed me. But I was too busy. 'Inasmuch as you did it not to the least of these, you did it not...'¹⁶

Ronald Sider reveals here some of his struggle in answering this call of God as it is particularly found in Jesus' teachings, (Matt. 25:31f.): as you clothed and fed the needy, visited the sick and imprisoned, welcomed the stranger, you did these things to me.

The call is rarely clear or easy when it comes, and there is always a struggle over whether or not to answer it.

Negative and positive elements strive within us, and we can only look at them and wonder or weep. You may sometimes see a clear case of angel and vulture in collision.¹⁷

This may remind one of Jesus' temptations, and also of Jacob at Peniel. (Gen. 32:24f.) In his nocturnal struggle with the angel of God, Jacob's well-known conniving side and emerging reconciling side

¹⁵ Juan Mateos, "The Message of Jesus," Sojourners, VI (July 1977), 15.

¹⁶ Sider, Rich Christians, p. 174.

¹⁷ Erving and Miriam Polster, Gestalt Therapy Integrated (New York: Vintage, 1973), p. 51.

meet head on. In that long restless night, Jacob knows that he has seen God face to face, yet his life is preserved; and when he is finally reconciled with Esau, he says: "Truly, to see your face is like seeing the face of God!" He has met his enemies--one is the rebellious side of himself, the other is his brother, who he discovers is really his friend.

Inspired by this same passage, Evelyn Miller wrote out her struggle in light of some of today's ethical dilemmas:

It may take a lifetime
 For me to get where I want to be
 I wonder sometimes
 Will there be enough time?
 From my early years of "bigger is
 better" measured in gardens, Buicks,
 and farms. Maybe not worldly
 extravagance--yet clearly
 more than less.
 From fellowship as a hall
 for potluck dinners
 to fellowship as a total sharing
 of our lives.
 From abundance as a symbol of God's
 Blessing
 to abundance as a resource for
 others' equality.
 From worship as an exercise
 in personal piety
 To worship as a corporate search
 to know God's will...
 From justice as a future hope for
 the have-nots
 to justice as a goal to be initiated
 now by the haves.
 When I really delight, trust, commit
 to the Lord, then wants will change
 from selfish comfort
 to restoring balance in nature,
 from excessive consumption
 to living a defiant simplicity,
 from ego edification
 to seeking more fully
 human relationships.

Like I said before, it may take
me a... well, uh, it may take me
quite awhile...
before I think my living
and act my thinking like Christ.¹⁸

If the struggle is genuine and personal, one must soon come, as Jacob did, as Evelyn Miller is trying to do, to see the truth about oneself. This is one of the most difficult tasks for any person, and one of the most feared, yet there is great hope in the outcome, for us as for Jacob. Jacob discovered, probably to his surprise, that "his life was preserved", and in Esau, the enemy he feared, he now saw the face of God!! What greater hope, what greater blessing, could one receive than to become whole within and to make peace with one's world?

Perhaps in this light, Isaiah's vision of God in the temple and his response to it can be understood. In the presence of the Lord of hosts, Isaiah exclaims, "Woe is me! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Then one of the seraphim touched Isaiah's lips with a burning coal, thus taking away his guilt and bringing forgiveness. The Lord then asks, "Who shall go for us?", and Isaiah responds, "Here am I! Send me." (Isaiah 6:5f).

Whenever one can hammer out the truth about oneself, then that one can relate to ultimate concerns.¹⁹ The power of God is sufficient for the tasks of ultimate importance which God calls the people to do. Yet even when one answers the call as Isaiah did, humbled and empowered, there is still the problem of actually committing oneself to that call,

¹⁸ Evelyn Miller, "Wrestling at Peniel", Sojourners VII (February 1978), 18-9.

¹⁹ Phillip A. Anderson, Church Meetings that Matter (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1965), p. 46.

and it is at this point that the need for community becomes crucial. There is always a struggle between commitment to self or to the community and justice. Elizabeth O'Connor shares the experience of the Church of the Savior in Washington, D.C.,²⁰ and it is out of this experience that she speaks. "Greed in the world today is the greatest contradiction of our interdependence and of the understanding of ourselves as a global community."²¹ Understanding oneself as part of that global community is a necessary antidote to greed.

This was without question the understanding of the early community of Christ-following Jews, and the breaking of faith with the community over greed warranted a heavy penalty, death! (See Acts 5:1-11) The struggle with oneself, then, is one of fear and one of greed, set over against the transformation of human society toward justice. Juan Mateos discusses the nature of the new Christian community in Jerusalem, and concludes that for the transformation of human society, "individual goodness is not enough; nor is good done from on high, or paternalistic charitable works or alms. Jesus wants the creation of a group in which there is neither mine nor yours, where everyone shares all that [s/he] has with the others." (Acts 2:42-45, 4:52)²²

The call for action leads into struggle. Who am I? What shall I do? And that struggle over commitment to self or to justice is better worked out with others who share both the vision and the fears.

²⁰Elizabeth O'Connor, The New Community (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).

²¹Ibid., p. 19

²²Mateos, p. 10

This community of believers serves many needs, among them worship, mutual support, and a center for working out fear and greed on the stone of God's will. It serves also as a model and vision of global community.

V. Summary

In the story of an imaginary letter from Zaccheus to another publican, the publican asks Zaccheus, "What did you see in Jesus' eyes when you looked up at him in the tree?" The answer came quietly, "I saw in his eyes the man I could become."²³

Everyone is always still becoming. This is the blessing of hope for all humans, and God has a stake in it! The question is whether one is purposefully "becoming", growing in a certain direction, and what it is that guides that growth. Christians are called to make that growth purposeful, and their guidance is knowledge of God through the Word and through prayer. Faithfulness to God helps one to distinguish between the gods and symbols of the world and the Creator, between greed and justice, and to rediscover the unity between body and spirit.

With such understandings, the Christian is better equipped to search out just and sustainable life practices in care of God's earth and God's people, to begin answering God's call for action, and with God's help is more able to overcome one's resistances. In short, one is able to say with Isaiah, "Here am I, send me!"

²³ Mortimer Arias, "Growth Awareness in a Group Experience," unpublished paper, Southern Methodist University Perkins School of Theology (Fall 1976), p. 38.

Chapter 3

DEFINING COMMON RESISTANCES

I. Introduction

This chapter attempts to understand some of the tremendous resistances to committed involvement for justice and sustainability in the more wealthy congregations of the American Protestant church. It will identify three main areas of resistance and discuss what has been done by some leaders to overcome them.

The first section relates resistance due to inadequate theological understanding of the nature of the Christian faith by the majority of church members. The second section identifies the resistances related to psychological or emotional cause, due mainly to fear of and/or anxiety about change. The third area of resistance is identified as informational, that is, resistances due either to lack of information (problem ignorance) or to what some writers call the "myths" about world problems.¹

These resistances must be dealt with if the church is to minister with commitment to the world, and one important place for struggling with them is in the small growth-action groups.

¹See especially, Francis Moore Lappe and Joseph Collins, Food First (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1977).

II. Resistances Due to Inadequate Theological Understanding

Interests on the part of church members toward prayer and action go together, and resistance to these seems to be based on preoccupation with self as the center, in the absence of transcendence.²

This is the conclusion reached by Dr. Carolyn Stahl after three years of acting as spiritual co-ordinator of the Burning Bush Project at the School of Theology at Claremont, a project designed to bring together spirituality and global responsibility in several local churches. Preoccupation with self cuts one off from others. The lack of transcendent relationship cuts one off from God. Both of these causes of perceived separateness need to be dealt with by the church community on rational, emotional and theological levels, but this is often not being done.

"Leave racism, development and disarmament to the politicians... it's nothing to do with us."³ This is portrayed by Charles Elliot in The Development Debate as a typical reaction by "Rev. Peter Pious" in one act of a development debate play. It is no wonder, then, that the Overseas Development Council, taking a survey of U.S. attitudes toward world poverty and development said, "The survey data reveal that religion's influence is in fact an insignificant factor in explaining an individual's level of information or disposition toward development issues." Of church members polled, they found that 38% favor concern for poor nations, 37% were non-committed (!) and 25% opposed it.⁴

²Personal Correspondence with Carolyn Stahl.

³Charles Elliot, The Development Debate (New York: Friendship Press, 1971), p. 8.

⁴Paul A. Laudicina, World Poverty and Development: A Survey of American Opinion (Washington: Overseas Development Council, October 1973), 78.

Theologically, this is an unsupportable place for the church to be in! The separation of church and state is the red flag which is always thrown up to excuse Christians from social concern. However, it should be understood that this separation is a separation of powers and loyalties, not a theological statement that the Christian faith has nothing to say about worldly affairs. John A. T. Robinson and many others witness to this, "It is in the political struggle that the battle for God's control of the world is fought out. Historical absenteeism is atheism."⁵

"The major stated resistance to social action is whether something is Christian! Having things scripturally based guarantees a lot more acceptability."⁶ Has church leadership failed to provide this scriptural basis?

Another major barrier to leaping into action for others is in seeing them as other. "We have not yet gained the realization that we are one in the spirit and in being radically interdependent!"⁷ Again, lack of informative theology has perpetuated this tragic state of affairs, which is intimately related to the issues of community discussed in the last chapter. Mortimer Arias refers to this narrow vision as the "privatization of religion", something he identifies as being a very strong tradition in the American church and society.⁸

⁵Harvey Seifert and Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Personal Growth and Social Change (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 209.

⁶Personal Correspondence with Carolyn Stahl.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Mortimer Arias, "Growth Awareness in a Group Experience," unpublished paper, Southern Methodist University Perkins School of Theology (Fall 1976), p. 29.

Others have made the same observation. Jean Baker Miller calls it lack of affiliation (or sense of sharing) on the part of men in particular, but she goes on to say that the need for relating and communing is there, hidden because it is culturally unacceptable.⁹ The same lack of sharing and domination is seen between rich and poor, powerful and weak, in all parts of life.

Economy is another area where this resistance of individualism is found.

Confusion is seen in economic life by the introduction of an individualistic economy as over against the communal system; by the commercialization of agriculture, with its increasing dependence on an outer world economy; by the decay of arts and crafts and traditional occupations; and by a social development depending upon a competitive rather than cooperative industrialization controlled by a minority and often involving imperialistic domination.¹⁰

This statement is from ecumenical papers written before 1954.

individualistic - communal
commercialization - arts and crafts
imposed economy - indigenous economy
competition - cooperation
domination - liberation

In his discussion on moral development, Kohlberg would place the left side of this polarity under what he calls the conventional level of development, defined as the level at which one maintains the expectations of the family, group or nation regardless of the consequences. The attitude is one of conformity, of maintaining and justifying the order, i.e., the status quo. This is held in contrast to the post conventional level. This is the level where principles are

⁹ Jean Baker Miller, Toward a New Psychology of Women (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976), pp. 83; 89.

¹⁰ Paul Bock, In Search of a Responsible World Society (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), p. 194.

upheld for the sake of conscience, and not defined as universal, rational principles. The principles are abstract and ethical (as the Golden Rule), not concrete (as the Ten Commandments), and would be more associated with the right portion of this polarity.¹¹

Community, mutual support, true freedom and cooperation are goals which are scripturally based. The church must clearly say this in order to foster justice and meet the stated reason for resistance on the part of many of its members. Self and other must be perceived as interdependent.

Christians have the responsibility and opportunity to help individuals see patterns of meaning and purpose in rapidly changing patterns of thinking and values...and may encourage uprooted individuals to explore and experience the potential relevance of the Christian hope for their own situation. This task is crucial for promoting development because imprisoned minds and spirits cannot foster development; they are timid, fearful, defensive, rather than open, experimental, creative. They cannot tolerate change and uncertainty, but grasp after authority and security. Fettered spirits tend to be preoccupied with the self and have little emotional energy to think about the needs of others. By helping evolve an integrated perspective on life, the potential energies of individuals are released; they are thus helped to become contributing hands instead of consuming mouths.¹²

And how about the energy crisis? Is that a theological problem for Christians? Wendell Berry thinks so.

The energy crisis is not a crisis of technology, but of morality...the knowledge of limits...and of how to live within them is the most comely and graceful knowledge that we have....The knowledge that purports to be leading us to transcendence of our limits has been with us a long time. It thrives by offering material means of fulfilling a spiritual, and therefore materially unappeasable craving.

¹¹Lawrence Kohlberg, "Collected Papers on Moral Development and Moral Education" (Cambridge, Ma., 1973), pp. 343-4.

¹²Richard Dickinson, Line and Plummet (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968), p. 69.

One of the fundamental paradoxes of our condition is that we can make ourselves whole only by accepting our partiality, by living within our limits, by being human--not by trying to be gods.¹³ (See also the story of the Tower of Babel, Gen. 11:1-9)

Preoccupation with self, the absence of transcendence, cut off-ness; by exploring these sources of resistance with honest reflection and prayer, with the support of a group of others who are also probing deeper, one may discover the interdependence of self with others, the humble state of the self before God. When this happens, resistances from these causes cannot stand.

III. Anxiety

It is crucial to learn to cope with the irrational and non-rational dimensions of personality when planning social change, there is a need to involve both the head level and the heart level.¹⁴

Two sources of anxiety will be discussed in this section: fear and change, though there is some overlap which appears as fear of change. In his book What Are You Afraid Of?, John Wood says,

Many of the social directions we have taken in the past fifty years make up a good recipe for fear. Rapid change, new environments, crowded conditions, more and more noise, an overload of stimuli--things that we are inherently afraid of or that encourage fear.¹⁵

A good example of stimuli and noise overload is advertising. One estimate has it that the average American teenager has seen 350,000

¹³Wendell Berry, The Unsettling of America (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1977), pp. 94-5.

¹⁴Seifert and Clinebell, p. 40.

¹⁵John T. Wood, What Are You Afraid of? (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p. 90.

television ads before graduating from high school.¹⁶ In addition to the sensory appeal (which in this magnitude amounts to sensory abuse), advertising represents the rapidity of change, which is one source of fear. Something "NEW!" is hawked daily. Might this increase the pervading sense of fear due to change?

Another of the causes of fear is fear of conflict. In order to grow, one must encounter what is different. Especially in issues of social or economic inequality fear of confrontation on the part of the dominant group usually leads to denial of the problem rather than to a vision of the growth which can only come through confrontation, a confrontation which may not be as devastating as it seems.¹⁷ (Remember Jacob?)

Fear leads to apathy,¹⁸ which leads to resistance and inaction in the church and to the need for open discussion about one's fears.

Anxiety over change likewise has several causes. One cause is not to change a system which one perceives has benefited her/him, even if the old system is no longer beneficial to that person.

We all tend to perpetuate the values, institutions and relationships which have brought us good things.... What was beneficial, fluid, creative becomes brittle, arthritic and inflexible....The frontier becomes a homestead, then a walled city to be defended by law and order....That is why, while we experience a moral crisis of social justice today, the deeper crisis--to some extent for both rich and poor--is a spiritual crisis, a crisis of imagination, vision and hope.¹⁹

¹⁶ Ronald J. Sider, Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger (Downers Grove, Il.: Intervarsity Press, 1977), p. 46.

¹⁷ Miller, p. 13.

¹⁸ Wood, p. 94.

¹⁹ Richard Dickinson, To Set at Liberty the Oppressed (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1975), p. 112.

Richard Dickinson has indirectly pointed out what this anxiety often leads to, a conflict between "law and order" of the status quo on one side and those who envision a crisis, often a spiritual crisis, on the other. Often out of just such an anxiety, Christians have run to perpetuate the values and institutions which have benefited them, but which stand only at great cost to oppressed peoples; and many pastors have gone among the flock. In another writing, Dickinson points to the conservative element in the church and says it is there because conservative professional leadership in theological education provides no experience or confidence for dealing with social problems except on the micro-social level, and conservative lay leadership tends to represent the more successful and prestigious elements in the community who benefit from the present order.²⁰

Where is our theology?? Will the church address the criticism of Ronald Sider as it applies to Christians: "The standard of living is the god of the 20th century American, and advertising is its prophet."²¹

The dizzy pace of change frequently has traumatic effects on individuals, families and social groups. Some of the results of rapid change are the loss of clear identity and sense of worth, loneliness caused by uprootedness and urban anonymity, massive social conflicts due to injustices of social and economic systems.²² In the midst of all this, the church community and its small groups can provide a basis

²⁰ Dickinson, Line, p. 54. ²¹ Sider, p. 174.

²² Issy Pilowsky, (ed.) Cultures in Collision (Hampstead Gardens, South Australia: Austraprint, 1975), p. 255.

for inner growth and healing, a haven for the soul, and an anvil upon which the shape of social action may be worked.

As Wood observes, we have little need to defend, to hide, when we are filled from the inside.²³ Such inner strength is available when one shares beliefs, values and group solidarity with others. These are resources which help lower paralyzing anxiety and rigid defenses against change so that one can respond more constructively.

This last statement closely resembles what Clinebell calls salugenic religion as he describes three types of religion and their effects on the person and on social change.²⁴

Negative religion adds to fear, guilt, distrust, self-rejection in the person, resulting in regression and blocking against needed changes. Positive, or salugenic religion, adds to a person's trust, ability to love and to live as a constructive member of society. This leads to motivation for change in the social arena.

Salugenic religion can undergird social change in two ways:

1) personal faith and a religious support group can help one cope constructively with the stresses and anxieties of change, helping one see this change as an opportunity for growth, and 2) it can help motivate one to function as a change agent to influence the direction of social change in institutions. These two faces of salugenic religion must be kept in balance,²⁵ and it has been found that they must be intertwined throughout the process of a Growth-Action group. Spending

²³Wood, p. 79, also: Otis A. Maxfield and Donald E. Smith, "Therapeutic Dimensions in Church Groups," Pastoral Psychology, XV:145 (June 1964), 45.

²⁴Pilowsky, p. 257.

²⁵Personal Correspondence with Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., October 27, 1977.

too much time consistently on sharing or on social action will be detrimental to the group and reduce its effectiveness on both the personal and social levels.

From the Gestalt point of view, resistances need to be experienced to be overcome. When the resistance is assimilated within the person, when the person experiences that s/he is the resistance, then it becomes part of one's purposiveness, contributing its strength rather than subtracting from life.

"What usually passes for resistance is not just a dumb barrier to be removed, but a creative force for managing a difficult world."²⁶ Instead of fighting the resistance or seeking to remove it, it is better to focus on it, take the person as s/he is accentuate the resistance so that it becomes an energized part of the character replacing stagnant stereotypes with living reality.

This experiencing and re-integration of a resistance with oneself is one method that leaders of the Growth-Action group can use to identify and overcome barriers and open the path toward salugenetic religion.

Another tool for achieving positive religion is to involve the group in small, achievable projects which will help free persons from immobilizing fear of change. Power is, in large part, the ability to achieve one's purpose, and using that power makes one the pilot of change instead of its prisoner.²⁷

²⁶ Erving and Miriam Polster, Gestalt Therapy Integrated (New York: Vintage, 1973), pp. 52-4 (for more detail see discussion of five general types of resistance, pp. 70-92).

²⁷ Seifert and Clinebell, pp. 193; 22.

It is evident that the sense of purposelessness which affects many WASP's of middle-class suburban congregations, particularly in middle age and beyond, can only be treated by pouring their lives into some challenging cause.²⁸

Often the changes involved in new commitments and understandings, especially if they are significant, are experienced by the person as a loss.²⁹ This loss is a "little death" and involves some degree of grief work to help the person separate his/her new identity from the old. To paraphrase Clinebell for the purpose here, the loss of something which has been a part of one's world of meanings and satisfactions is a psychological amputation. After a severe loss a person needs to be fed, psychologically and spiritually. The working through of painful feelings is an indispensable part of healing!³⁰

It may be that in the context of faith this loss is due to voluntary change (such as new uses of time, disposal of luxury items, giving up old ways of thinking, etc.) may be handled first through modified versions of grief work and then as offerings at the altar, alone, in the presence of the group or perhaps of the whole church.

Using the Gestalt concept of boundaries, the loss may be coped with by re-working familiar boundaries, those limits one places on the vision of oneself because they are familiar.

At first a loss may seem catastrophic, or the threat of it may scare one away from voluntary change, but it may be a yet unseen point of gain, and this aspect should be explored. In their discussion on

²⁸Ibid., p. 22.

²⁹Ibid., p. 37.

³⁰Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 167.

familiarity boundaries, the Polsters say, "One's future welfare often travels in disguise and its blessings are frequently recognized only after extensive turmoil."³¹ In trying to save one's life, s/he may lose it, in letting go, s/he may save it!

One also could work with the idea of the "fertile void" to help reduce anxiety over change. Christians may understand this in part to be the place where God's working enters their lives. In Gestalt terms it is described as "the existential metaphor for giving up the familiar supports of the present and trusting the momentum of life to produce new opportunities and vistas."³²

Instead of concentrating solely on what one is giving up, s/he could explore rationally and emotionally what might be discovered and gained by letting go of the familiar, in the faith that life will pick one up again.

There are many needs involved in a person's growth and ability to act constructively. Clinebell mentions the following examples:

1. basic trust to deal with existential loneliness and anxiety
2. value base to reduce meaninglessness, boredom, hopelessness, depression
3. focus of devotion shared by a group--causes
4. renewing experiences of transcendence, with/through nature, prayer, music, intimate communication
5. forgiveness to remove alienation from guilt
6. renewal of hope and a sense of the future³³

³¹ Polster, p. 120. ³² Ibid., p. 121. ³³ Pilowsky, pp. 258-9.

These needs can be met by the theologizing, sharing and acting of a small group with this intent. Increased mental health can help motivate persons for mission to the world community, and involvement in social improvement may be a most effective way of reducing personal problems.³⁴ The fear of change will likely always be there, because social needs and personal lives do constantly change. "The true task is to design a society (and institutions) capable of continuous change, continuous renewal, continuous responsiveness to human need." (quoting John Gardner, then of the U.S. Dept. of HEW) In creating such a need-satisfying society, growth groups play an important role.³⁵

IV. Myths and Problem Ignorance

[their] education had had the curious effect of making things that [they] read and wrote more real to [them] than the things [they] saw. Statistics about agricultural laborers were the substance; any real ditcher, ploughman...was the shadow, Though [they] had never noticed it [themselves], [they] had a great reluctance...ever to use such words as 'man' or 'woman'... [but] preferred to write about 'vocational groups', 'elements', 'classes', and 'populations': for in [their] own way, [they] believed as firmly as any mystic in the superior Reality of the things that are not seen. (Berry quoting C.S. Lewis)³⁶

"Too many people, poor climate, rotten soil...maybe we ought to help them more, but we always seem to be shelling out to the developing countries."³⁷

Problem ignorance and myths, these are two causes for resistance with which the Growth-Action Group must cope before members will understand the needs of people and environment and see their role with prophetic insight.

³⁴Seifert and Clinebell, p. 19.

³⁵Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., The People Dynamic (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 150.

³⁶Berry, p. 142.

³⁷Elliot, p. 10.

The Overseas Development Council report (referred to earlier) also discovered in its survey of American church members that they are generally very ignorant of development issues, of the immensity and character of global poverty problems, of U.S. response and of the prospects for solutions!³⁸ So, it should be clear at the outset that increased problem awareness is a prime goal for the church and its believers.

One question of awareness which needs to be raised and answered is, What is responsible development?

Development is often seen as towns, schools, and the transplanting of Western concepts to other areas--i.e., economic growth.³⁹ In the next chapter this question will be dealt with more fully. For now, let a definition of development be seen as a need which must be met in order to raise problem awareness.

De-mythologizing (often through increased information) is also important for combatting the fear discussed in the last section, for as Wood points out, fear is bred in a vacuum of information and power.⁴⁰ Education, then, becomes another goal of the group and its leaders. The old adage, "consider the source", comes to mind. Persons should be called to carefully choose their reading materials and other modes of educating themselves in order to be exposed to both sides of a situation.

Too often, the general public is exposed, as Seifert and Clinebell point out, to

education which brings people up to prevailing social standards and keeps them from going beyond existing imperfections. Technology has been harnessed to defend

³⁸Laudicina, pp. 4-5. ³⁹Elliot, p. 18. ⁴⁰Wood, p. 154.

the status quo. Mass communication, with its tendency to conservative bias, may drug listeners into passive acceptance of the traditional.⁴¹

It is difficult to break through the educational and social barriers to see the power structures and be courageous enough to try to alter unjust ones, but it is certainly easier to do so with the support of others.

There is another awareness problem inherent in dominant, powerful groups or nations, perhaps especially in America (and therefore in middle-class white Protestant churches). Warren Farrell describes this problem in relation to male-female relationships in male dominated societies, but it is similarly to be found in many dominant-subordinate patterns.

When men attend women's liberation meetings they tend to stand up and give speeches; they dominate small group discussions; they expect women to operate in a system of power, money and organization established by men; they solve problems rather than ask questions, and continue to assume the masculine roles which have simultaneously limited men and established barriers for women's self-development.⁴²

It is very important to keep this insight in mind when one belongs to the dominant (white, male, rich, American, etc.) group, and to really listen to what the "rebels" are saying, from their point of view. This is part of education and information gathering which may help one see her/his solidarity with men and women heretofore seen as "other."

The resistance to helping others which is born of myths is a combination of educational and attitudinal half-truths. Francis Moore

⁴¹Seifert and Clinebell, p. 46.

⁴²Warren Farrell, The Liberated Man (New York: Bantam, 1974), p. 5.

Lappe and Joe Collins attempt to dispel many of the myths that the developed world holds about poverty, hunger, land use and other related issues. For example, they point out that hunger is not due primarily to poor soil, or climate, or over-population; it is rather the symptom of a disease, the disease of economic systems which perpetuate unequal distribution of wealth.⁴³ Shirley Greene has written a paper on the Free Market Myth in U.S. Agriculture, showing that the well-loved term "free market" no longer describes the fact of the matter for most U.S. farmers or consumers,⁴⁴ a situation which is echoed in the world food market.

Another myth which the developed world has been persuaded to believe is that "technology will find the answer" to whatever the present problem. "Technology cannot stay ahead of population growth and economic growth unless it can first catch up, and today there is little sign of even the latter."⁴⁵ A case in point is the race for nuclear energy use. There are 5200 tons of spent radioactive fuel presently in the U.S., and there is still no solution for safe storage in sight,⁴⁶ and the stockpile of radioactive waste is expected to grow to 37,900 tons by 1990. Will technology save us in time from our own destruction?

⁴³Lappe and Collins, p. 7.

⁴⁴Shirley Greene and Richard Priggie, "The Free Market Myth," Christianity and Crisis, XXXVII (October 31, 1977), 249-253.

⁴⁵For extended discussion of this point see Paul R. Ehrlich, Anne H. Ehrlich, and John P. Holdren, Human Ecology (San Francisco: Freeman, 1973), p. 14ff.

⁴⁶Peter Gwynne et al., "A Flood of Hot Waste," Newsweek, XCIII (January 15, 1979), 83.

A third myth of the present culture is that resources are inexhaustable. Figures from the U.S. Bureau of Mines on world resource depletion at the assumed growth rate of consumption indicate that nickel, tungsten, petroleum and manganese will be gone in less than a century, and chromium and coal in 154 years or less.⁴⁷ It will require public knowledge of these myths and the facts as some see them to break down the resistance which abides by the status quo.

In educating oneself to others' viewpoints and dispelling myths about the causes of perceived problems, one is likely to discover, among other things, that s/he is part of a global picture; that famine, war, disease, revolution are connected to his/her life. Then the individual, the church group, is faced with a critical choice: to act out of fear or to act out of love.⁴⁸

V. Summary

In Chapter 6, exercises for coping with the resistances discussed in this chapter are offered. There are, no doubt, other sources of resistance to personal change and social action, but of the ones explored here it can already be seen that they are many--theological, emotional, educational. Yet the Christian is called to follow a new way, to give up many old, familiar things, and to do so in community with others who seek to answer God's call. The sense of belonging to a group for most Christians is crucial for achieving

⁴⁷ Ehrlich, Ehrlich and Holdren, p. 64, citing The Limits to Growth.

⁴⁸ Wood, p. 103.

these changes in a world which usually stands strongly against alterations in the present order.

Christ-followers today stand in a long tradition of persons who banded together in order to pursue God's purposes instead of the purposes of established values and institutions, a tradition which began with the disciples.

The changes in their lives indicate that the disciples who followed Jesus accepted a new belonging. They gave up the previous belongings to families, fishermen and tax collectors as they felt an increasing identification with Jesus and with one another. Belonging to the group known as the disciples of Jesus slowly became the most significant relationship of their lives. The extent to which this new belonging had become all important for them became evident in the strength of their witness and the maintenance of their common life, even against the social and religious patterns of their culture. They had changed. They were followers of 'the way.'⁴⁹

⁴⁹Phillip A. Anderson, Church Meetings that Matter (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1965), pp. 80-1.

Chapter 4

CONCERNS FOR ECO-JUSTICE:

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES OF GLOBAL PROPORTION

I. Introduction

So far this paper has discussed theological groundwork for understanding the Christian's place in the issues of justice and sustainability, and some of the resistances persons in the church have to struggle with when attempting to live by such a theology. The outlines for the Growth-Action group are yet to come. This chapter will explore what all the "fuss" is actually about. It can only begin to establish that there is indeed something to be worried about in the areas of justice and sustainability.

The two concerns put forward here, exploitation of the environment and exploitation of people, are general headings under which fall many urgent problems. A few facets of each category are presented. Each section deals first with the problem, then with the goal. This is very important for keeping vision and hope alive. Without them, even the bravest crusader, seeing no use, resigns her/himself to doing nothing.

Several writers have attempted to awaken an awareness of the attitude which prevails in the developed world toward the land and toward human beings.

Berry talks in this context about the exploiter and the nurturer. He says that the exploiter is one whose standard is

efficiency, whose goal is money and profit, who is a specialist, who works to earn as much as possible with as little work as possible, who asks of a piece of land how much and how quickly it can be made to produce. In contrast, the standard of the nurturer is care, the goal is health--health for the land, for oneself, one's family, community and world, the questions asked of a piece of land are: What is its carrying capacity? How much can it produce dependably for a period of time without diminishing it? The nurturer wishes to work as well as possible.¹

Paulo Freire speaks of the oppressor in language strangely close to that of Berry's on the exploiter: for the oppressor, "to be is to have", soon the oppressor no longer is, but merely has, having more is an inalienable right gained through one's own effort and those who have not are therefore lazy; the oppressor tends to in-animate everything.²

These strong words of Berry and Freire should add perspective to the discussion of exploitation to follow. Not even the most ardent opponent of conservation and development for the impoverished world can deny that more resources are being used and more people are in need than ever before. It is a serious picture indeed when the Secretary General of the United Nations Environmental Program states that our rising desires and growing population have brought humankind to the outer limits of what the earth can sustainably provide.³ It is very

¹Wendell Berry, The Unsettling of America (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1977), p. 7.

²Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), pp. 44-5.

³Mostafa K. Tolba, "The State of the Environment: Selected Topics, 1977," Speech at 5th Session of the United Nations at Nairobi, May, 1977, p. 2.

easy when hearing such statements to feel like the problems are too big, and perhaps they are. But as people of a resurrection faith, who have experienced the abject darkness of Good Friday, but then discovered that God had further plans, Christians are reminded of hope, even when there seems to be none. For this is, after all is said and done, God's world, and the church is called to serve that world!

II. Exploitation of the Environment

A. The Problem

Agriculture is the science of impounding solar energy for the sustenance of human life and community,⁴ and soil is the placenta which enables living things to feed upon the earth.⁵

M. King Hubbert, a federal geophysicist, says world oil production should peak and begin to decline by about 1995, coal and iron about 2100 A.D. "Children born within the last ten years will see the world consume most of its oil during their lifetime. No physical quantity can follow this curve of exponential growth for more than a brief period of time." Our real problem is not resources, but culture, we need to re-adjust away from a philosophy of exponential growth...⁶

To look at current agricultural practices, most particularly those developed by American technology, and to observe oil consumption,

⁴C. Dean Freudenberger, "Toward a U.S. Food and Farm Policy in Context of an Impoverished Humanity and Threatened Biosphere," (December, 1976), p. 7.

⁵Russell Lord, The Care of the Earth (New York: Nelson, 1962), p. 24.

⁶Taken from New York Times, Thursday, (December 2, 1976).

again, particularly in America, one could hardly imagine that the above statements have any credence at all.

If U.S. agricultural practices were to be used world wide, 80% of the world's present energy use would be funnelled into some aspect of agriculture!⁷ Yet this agriculture is called, at least by Americans, the most efficient ever?! And the basis of this agriculture is oil, used not only to fuel tractors and airplanes, but also to produce a whole array of chemicals designed to increase yields (fertilizer) and to control insect pests (insecticides), weeds (herbicides), fungus (fungicides), etc. The question one might ask is, "When does all this add up to soilicide and suicide?"

Soilicide, that is the killing of soil micro-biology (bacteria, fungi, etc.) and other flora which are essential for fertile soil, occurs rapidly. Suicide may be coming in forms yet unrecognized, such as environmentally caused cancers.⁸

Each aspect of the environment deserves a longer look. Two will be addressed here: soil loss and the ocean, both now facing troubles of global importance.

By soil loss the writer means to include losses due to erosion and "loss" due to misuse leading to infertility. It is startling to discover that 170 years ago areas in Chad, which is now engulfed by the Sahara Desert, were heavily forested.⁹ Desertification of that

⁷"Family Farming and the Common Good," Hunger, No. 7 (February 1977), 3.

⁸See Tolba, pp. 12f.

⁹Matthijs de Vreede, Deserts and Man (The Hague: Government Printing Office, 1977), p. 18.

heavily forested land took place after its protective cover was removed, and the fragile soil was left to bake in the sun. Desertification is defined as "any dynamic process, usually created by humans, which contributes to the diminution or destruction of the biological potential of land." By this definition it is estimated that 30% of the world's land area and one fifth of the population are already affected; 650,000 square kilometers of farm and range land have been lost in the past fifty years along the southern edge of the Sahara, which has moved southward 62 miles in the Sudan in less than 20 years. The causes of this tragedy are identified as overgrazing, overcropping, and salinization due to poor irrigation practices.¹⁰

"For sustained, long-term productivity, the carrying capacity of the land must be carefully evaluated and not exceeded." Unfortunately, this counsel by Mostafa Tolba of the UNEP is rarely heeded. He goes on to report that the Sahara is far from being alone in this process. Irrigated lands in India, California, Colorado, Mexicali, the Tigris-Euphrates area, and others are suffering from salinization. Every year 200,000 to 300,000 acres are lost to farming because of this problem.

Wind erosion is also a serious problem, brought about largely by damage to soil structure and fertility by the overuse of pesticides, fertilizers, inappropriate plowing and use of heavy machinery. Microbiotic life in the soil is likewise destroyed. Some scientists think that soil wind erosion and the reduction of bacterially produced gases in soil may affect climates! Clearly a global perspective is needed,

¹⁰Gamini Seneviratne, "The Desert is Man," Development Forum, V (October 1977), 8.

for insufficient care has been taken to insure that a short rise in productivity is not leading to temporary or permanent damage.¹¹

Soil development takes place over millenia, its destruction under too much or the wrong kind of use can occur in decades or years, often irreversibly. Present agricultural systems lead to instability, major pest outbreaks, loss of organic matter and fertility due to refusal to fallow fields (the "sabbath rest for the land").

Often the appropriate technology for the farming of marginal lands does not exist, where it does exist it is frequently disregarded for social, economic or political reasons. "Overgrazing and over-cultivation on steep hillsides everywhere has led to serious erosion." Other causes of erosion--slash and burn methods of clearing land and deforestation, present losses of soil estimated at one half ton per person per year worldwide!

In historical times 2000 MILLION hectares (= 2.47 acres) have been lost to agricultural production, this compared with an estimated 3200 million hectares available today, and 1500 which are actually in use. Tolba reports estimates that 600 million more hectares will be lost by the year 2000 due to erosion (300 million ha) and urbanization (300 million ha), while perhaps 300 million hectares can be opened to farming in that time.¹² This represents an obvious loss of total acreage, and a deeper loss in the ratio of farmland to people. Note that the causes of this land loss could be avoided!

Though much of this information comes from one source, it is supported by the findings of many others. Tolba is quoted extensively

¹¹Tolba, pp. 22-3.

¹²Ibid., pp. 19-21.

because of his vision of this situation on the global scale, because his remarks are recent, and because he speaks from a less biased position as a representative of the United Nations than some other outspoken environmentalists. For further information on this topic of desertification one might turn to the Desertification Conference materials coming from Nairobi, August, 1977. The trends of soil loss are not new, but they are occurring at increasing rates due to the technological ability now to open new lands for agri-"culture" on a large scale in marginal areas.

In many cases the processes of desertification and erosion have followed the path of colonial domination, which put land into cultivation for cash crops (sugar, cotton, tobacco, copra, rubber, tea, coffee, and others) to be exported to the metropole. This often meant that indigenous peoples were forced off the land or used as laborers for very low wages, that the indigenous farming techniques were replaced by others not suitable for the climate, and that when the soils wore out the land was left behind for newer, more fertile areas.¹³ This process continues today. Often physical force and taxes have been used to enforce the continued growth of cash crops, even when the land was desperately needed for food by those whose hands farmed it. According to Food First, many famines occurred in India under British rule while record crops were exported and huge profits made.¹⁴ These

¹³C. Dean Freudenberger and Paul Minus, Jr., Christian Responsibility in a Hungry World (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976), pp. 21-2, on colonial legacy.

¹⁴Francis Moore Lappe and Joseph Collins, Food First (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1977), pp. 79; 94.

authors conclude that overpopulation and scarcity of food are not the causes of hunger, but that it is a problem caused primarily by unjust economic systems.

The following lengthy passage is quoted in its entirety, because if one were not told which powerful nations in history the author was describing, the discussion could pass for the present situation of several nations.

Toynbee, in his Study of History, supports the thesis that in Greece and Rome improvements in the art of agriculture, coinciding with improvements in the arts of war, brought on a general decline in the civilization. "The first technical advance in agriculture--'from a regime of mixed farming to a regime of specialized agriculture for export--was followed by an outburst of energy and growth.'" But this did not last for long.

The next step in technical advancement was an increase in the scale of operations through the organization of mass production based on slave labor,...impersonal, inhuman and on a grand scale. 'On the lands of Rome this transition notably increased the productivity of the land and the profit of the capitalist, but it reduced the land to social sterility; slave plantations displaced and pauperized the peasant yeoman...the social consequence was the depopulation of the countryside and the creation of a parasitic urban proletariat in the cities....The plantation-slave system persisted until it collapsed spontaneously in consequence of the breakdown of the money economy on which it depended for its profits.'¹⁵

In addition, leaders of the land reform and dispersal movement in Rome were assassinated! To anyone who reads the newspaper, in particular with attention to the farm workers in California (for example), the parallels should be abundantly clear!

¹⁵Arnold Toynbee, A Study of History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 195.

Thor Heyerdahl, if he can speak loudly enough to be heard, may be giving the world a badly needed warning about the worsening state of the oceans. In 1947 he sailed Kon-Tiki across the Pacific, seeing no sign of human activity except an old wrecked ship. In 1969 he and his crew crossed the Atlantic in the boat Ra, and were shocked to find plastic containers, nylon, bottles, cans and oil on the surface. In 1970 he set out once again, in Ra II, taking a daily survey of the surface with dripnets hauled behind the boat. This survey revealed oil clots floating within reach of the nets 43 out of 57 days of the trip! This oil and other pollutants, he says, are endangering the life of the ocean creatures, including the plankton which are so vitally important. Especially in a time when the world needs to depend more and more on the oceans, this is an ominous trend.

If we kill the plankton, we lose the fish, and thus drastically reduce the protein available for human sustenance...if we kill the plankton we reduce to less than half the supply of oxygen available to humans and beasts, and this at a time when forests are becoming scarcer than ever before....Since life on land is so utterly dependent on life in the sea, we can safely deduce that a dead sea means a dead planet.¹⁶

The oceans seem so large that they have often been seen (and used) as bottomless dumps for wastes. It is important to realize that 90% of marine life lives on the continental shelves. These shelves make up only 8% of the ocean surface, and 1% of the volume! It is into this one percent that all the rivers flow, laden with uncountable pollutants . 18,000 million cubic meters of liquid pollution flow each year into the oceans from the rivers of France alone, 9000 million

¹⁶Barbara Ward and Rene Dubos, et al., Who Speaks for Earth? (New York: Norton, 1973), pp. 49; 59.

cubic meters from Germany's rivers. In addition, nuclear waste containers are "stored" on the ocean floor, many are leaking already and have caused millions of fish to die or be mutilated.

Deliberate dumping in the sea of material too dangerous to keep in sight should be considered a criminal act...but by far the greatest quantity of toxic refuse reaches the sea from agricultural fields and industrial sewers.

Less conspicuous yet is the air pollution carried down by rain, an estimated 142 million tons per year from American cities alone (in 1973).¹⁷

"We should take the oil as a warning of all that goes into the sea which is unseen and deadly."¹⁸ A dead sea means a dead planet. Who speaks for earth??

B. The Goal--Sustainability

From these examples of the way in which the world is presently being degraded, it should be clear that human attempts to control life cycles and to have more and more goods must be stopped. And this not only because of the generations to come, but for the inner spirits of those who live now, for the health of all life, and especially for the love of God who made the earth beautiful and good. Those who destroy the creations of their own Creator cannot claim to love that Creator.

We have learned to be fascinated by the statistics of magnitude and power. There is apparently no limit in sight, no end, and so it is no wonder that our minds, dizzy with numbers, take refuge in a yearning for infinitudes of energy and materials.¹⁹

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 55f.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁹Ian Barbour (ed.) Finite Resources and the Human Future (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976), p. 100.

It is time to think now of growth qualitatively, not quantitatively. The ability to analyze long-range results is new, and likely to begin affecting decisions. (emphasis added)²⁰

But this is not enough, because long-range results even now are not always known.²¹ Qualitative theological reflection is needed. There are questions which should be asked which will help reach a wholistic vision of life which is sustainable.

The ethic of environmental sustainability means that what one does to sustain oneself can be done by everyone, everywhere, forever. It calls for norms of prevention from wind erosion, for sod maintenance, for prevention of salinization from irrigation and the atmospheric destruction of ozone . What would it say about the build-up of chemical residues in the soil, and about depletion of the water table? In responsible land use, what perspective is needed to deal with urban sprawl, with land speculation, strip mining and the consequent destruction of aquifers (water-bearing strata), deforestation and the abandonment of crop rotations? What is appropriate technology? What is social justice, human dignity? What is a responsible national commitment?²²

The goal is to build up the earth as servants, caretakers, to build it up for health, not tear it down for money. Leviticus 25 reminds both Christian and Jew of this goal.

²⁰Ibid., p. 139.

²¹See Tolba on ozone, pp. 5-11.

²²Freudenberger, "Toward," pp. 6; 13.

In the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath for the Lord....And if your brother [or sister] becomes poor and cannot maintain him [her] self with you, you shall maintain [her] him; as a stranger and a sojourner [she] he shall live with you... do not give him [her] food for profit...for the land is mine...you are strangers and sojourners with me. (Lev. 25:4, 35-37, 23)

God reminds all people that they must live within the limits which God has set. The Lord reminds the people that they are sojourners receiving the produce of the earth through its proper care and through receiving those in need as sojourners, in turn.

Past the scale of the human, our works do not liberate us, they confine us. They cut off access to the wilderness of creation where we must go to be reborn--to receive the awareness, at once humbling and exhilarating, grievous and joyful, that we are part of creation, one with all that we live from and all that, in turn, lives from us.²³

The problems are very complex and large, but this must not be used to cloud the goal which is clear and simple: responsible, nurturing use of God's gifts. For many, the hardest part of reaching this goal will be to "give up" some aspects of modern affluent society which now seem necessary. This is often seen as a tremendous burden, but it need not be. Wendell Berry suggests that the Amish have developed a model which might well be followed, a model which can take land which is unusable under agribusiness methods of farming, and make it very productive; a model which reveals a lifestyle lacking many of the average American possessions, but also lacking many of the spiritual and physical costs of the proverbial American dream.²⁴

Robert Stivers, in his book The Sustainable Society, has critically studied several proposals of how the limits to growth may

²³ Berry, p. 104.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 210f.

be faced and a sustainable social model achieved.²⁵ He claims no idealist's vision, admitting that these goals will be very difficult to achieve. Out of his analysis the reader may conclude that the following factors must be considered in the transformation from growth-consumption economics to a sustainable world economy: reordering of the present economics, ethics and politics.

Reordering world economy would necessitate the development of a new vision of what comprises a sound economy in light of the earth's limits. Stivers suggests an economy of differentiating growth, one that concentrates on non-polluting and non-depleting forms of economic activity and aims at the two goals of environmental soundness and contribution to human welfare. This concept grows out of an MIT study which showed that an economic equilibrium can only be achieved with significant reductions in pollution generation and natural resource use. This study also yielded a set of general requirements for global equilibrium:

1. capital investment rate equals capital depreciation rate
 2. all input (birth/investment) and output (death/depreciation) should be kept to a minimum
 3. levels of capital and population and the ratio of the two are set in accordance with social values; these levels may be revised and slowly adjusted as advance of technology creates new options.
- A "dynamic equilibrium" is the goal, one which allows for change, but only within environmental limits, using a slowed flow rate (input vs.

²⁵Robert Stivers, The Sustainable Society (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 26.

output) as one means of limiting environmental burden and of making possible the satisfaction of the needs of all people.²⁶

Reordering present ethical values would have to go hand in hand with a new economic order. Societies would need to discover (re-discover) an ethical vision which critiques the present ethic of growth and offers a constructive alternative. Such a vision would appreciate the value of nature rather than see it only as an instrument for human use and exploitation. It would take God's grant of "dominion" over all the earth as a call to stewardship rather than self-serving destruction. It would reassess present attitudes toward work, consumption and abundance in light of renewable resources and human need. A reordering of ethical values would seek alternative solutions to problems for which growth has historically been the answer. Spiritual values and one's worldly activity would be reunited, leaving behind avarice and enslavement to the forces of affluence. Repentance and reconciliation in Jesus Christ would be rediscovered. All the moral strength which could be gathered would be needed to deal with the increased likelihood of political conflict due to redistribution of wealth, temporary unemployment and other adjustment problems.

Reordering political structures is the third vital objective outlined by Stivers toward the goal of sustainability. He envisions a system of checks and balances between a centralized global authority and local de-centralized seats of power. In his estimation, the global authority will be "necessary to ensure just distribution and prevent ruinous wars," while the de-centralized authority will lessen

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 187-8.

the danger of tyranny, and hopefully safeguard the necessary just distribution of resources.²⁷

There are alternatives to the present trends already in practice. The Amish have but one example with their organic farming and simple lifestyle. New Jersey has offered another by forming land use restrictions which prevent further loss of farmland to urbanization in that state.²⁸ An Algerian village and areas in China have been reclaiming the desert with the planting of trees.²⁹ Robert Stivers has a model calling for a new order in economics, ethics, and politics. These are visions toward sustainability, they are hope for the soil, the water, the air, and the health of all life which depends upon them.

The care of the earth is our most ancient and most worthy, and after all, our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it, and to foster its renewal, is our only legitimate hope.³⁰

III. Exploitation of People:

The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Poorer

A. The Problem

Hosea looks out at a greedy society where the powerful oppress the weak, where people worship idols of silver and gold, where they think that warriors and armaments and military alliances are the way to security, where sexual love has been perverted to sexual exploitation, where lying, killing, stealing and adultery are common. And Hosea says: this can't go on without destructive consequences. 'They sow the wind, the shall reap the whirlwind.'³¹

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 196-7.

²⁸ Taken from Christian Science Monitor, (February 6, 1978), 12.

²⁹ Lappe and Collins, p. 99.

³⁰ Berry, p. 14.

³¹ Barbour, pp. 176f.

The problem is oppression. Paulo Freire says that what characterizes oppression is the subordination of the oppressed to the consciousness of the master. The end of oppression can only come when the oppressor affirms solidarity with the oppressed as persons, not as an abstract category. It can come only when the oppressor stops making pious, sentimental, individualistic gestures and risks acts of love. "To affirm that men and women are persons and as persons should be free, and yet to do nothing to make this affirmation a reality, is a farce."³²

Oppression can be and is brought upon persons through political controls, unemployment due to mechanization or other causes, prejudice, unequal distribution of resources, lack of proper food, shelter and clothing. Most, if not all of these types of oppression have greed as a root cause, insofar as possessions, power and money tend to concentrate in the hands of a few--the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

"What right," asks Richard Dickinson, "does 5% of the world's population have to arrogate to itself the consumption of almost half of the world's annual use of non-renewable resources? And what right do we have living now to use up resources which may be needed by our children and grandchildren?"³³ And what right, it should be added, do the affluent have to use the lands of the poor for agricultural cash crops to be exported when 10,000 of the poor die daily for lack of

³²Freire, pp. 34-5.

³³Richard Dickinson, To Set at Liberty the Oppressed (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1975), p. 11.

food?!³⁴ The poor are caught in a double bind, often unemployed because they were replaced by a machine either on the land or in the factory, and unable to pay for food because its price has soared due to speculations of shortages or unstable markets. What was it the Lord said? "Do not give the poor food for a profit."

Another double bind for the poor is found in the area of trade. In order to increase income from exports, they may raise the production of one or more cash crops (or foreign landlords may do it for them). The effect of this is to take more land out of production for food, and usually to lower the price on the export market.³⁵ On the other hand, costs of imports often skyrocket, as they did for example from 1972-74, causing poor countries to pay \$6.6 billion for certain goods which had cost \$1.6 billion two years earlier!³⁶ Examples like these could go on at length. At this point it is important to turn back to the discussion on the nature of oppression, what it means, how it comes about in human dynamics, what it looks like so that it can be recognized.

Any situation in which A exploits B or hinders his [her] pursuit of self-affirmation as a person is one of oppression, it is violent, even if sweetened by generosity, because it interferes with a person's vocation to be more fully human.³⁷

Often oppression is not "sweetened" by much generosity. Though it is easy for Americans to feel that they have rights to what they pay for, others may remind America that costs are not only monetary, and rights are not one-sided. The other side of the Panama Canal issue is

³⁴Ronald J. Sider, Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1977), p. 172.

³⁵Richard Dickinson, Line and Plummet (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968), pp. 18f.

³⁶Sider, p. 143.

³⁷Freire, p. 40.

described by Latin American students:

You condemn the relics of colonialism in white racist rule in Rhodesia and South Africa. Why are you so slow to see 'the beam in your own eye'? During the construction of the canal more than 25,000 poor laborers from the Third World laid down their lives on the altar of First World economic development--yet your politicians have the gall to boast 'we built it!'³⁸

Such eye-opening reactions from the recipients of much of the developed world's best-intentioned (and worst-) "good will" would reveal the truth of Freire's statements that acts of love, not pious, sentimental or individualist acts, can really begin to free the oppressed. It could also help to free the affluent from their moral and spiritual crises and from hopes that are too small.

By what kind of value system can giving up a color TV, an electric toothbrush, a vacation to the Bahamas, a sailboat (or something even more fundamental and demanding) in order that God's children in another land or generation may have bread to eat, a school to attend, blindness prevented, joy, hope--by what kind of strained values could such action be called 'sacrificial'? More truly it ought to be understood as freeing, fulfilling, enriching...our hopes are too small. We have too little passion for justice, yes, but it is precisely because we have too little passion for significance, hope and liberation. We thought God was dead because we experienced that humanity was dead. Thus the moral and spiritual crises are interlocked, but the former will never be creatively tackled unless we unmask and confront the latter.³⁹

There is much letting go in this process, but also much taking up. For the church member there needs to be reflection which leads to knowledge of his/her dependence on God, and of God's stake in one's life and the lives of all God's creatures.

³⁸"Letter from Central America," International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, San Jose, Costa Rica. Sojourners VI (November 1977), 9.

³⁹Dickinson, To Set, p. 112.

Simkhovitch says that the root cause of the fall of Rome was faulty agriculture, and its effects on people.

Rome permitted its farming population to be wiped out, and then tried to make farmers out of idle city paupers... who could not make successful farmers even on good soil....The expropriation of the Roman peasantry, the concentration of land ownership in the hands of a few,... was also a very gradual process and ran parallel to the process of soil exhaustion....The transformation was slow and constant, and not only agonizing to the people, it was sapping the very life of Rome as a nation, decreasing its population, undermining its morals and convulsing its political fabric,...arousing the outcry of the indebted and bonded farmer...⁴⁰

The world is repeating this history of Rome, with the singular difference that the population has been increasing. The concentration of land, power and money in the hands of a few is by necessity accompanied by oppression and soil exhaustion.

B. The Goal--Justice

In his discussion on Plato's view of moral development, Kohlberg says that moral virtue means one thing, justice, which is a "matter of equal and universal human rights. Justice is not a concrete rule of action, it is a moral principle, a mode of choosing which is universal, a rule of choosing which we want all people to adopt always, in all situations."⁴¹ Note the similarity to the definition of sustainability on page 8.

Keeping this definition of justice clearly in mind, it would be helpful to set beside it the definition of conscientization, or conscientizaçao, a term which "refers to learning to perceive social,

⁴⁰Lord, p. 151.

⁴¹Lawrence Kohlberg, "Collected Papers on Moral Development and Moral Education" (Cambridge, Ma., 1973), p. 69.

political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality."⁴² "Conscientization is not an intellectual, emotional or physical exercise--it is being engaged with one's world, with other persons, and with the transformation of society--it is immersion in reality."⁴³ Conscientization is the practice of Plato's justice and a reflection of the prophetic principle discussed earlier. (Chapter 2)

In order for the goals of justice and conscientization to be achieved, there must be a vision of how to pursue them. It used to be that charity was seen as the means by which well-meaning Christians could help the poor, but this is no longer the case.

Justice, and not charity, has become the goal, out of the awareness that charity was inadequate and counter-productive in that it buttressed unjust structures, as well as undermined the will of people to develop themselves solutions to their problems. Conscientization has brought the growing conviction that the best thing the developed countries can do is not hand money over to developing countries, but radicalize the opinion of the developed world at large. Radicalization = 1) education, 2) effective response, 3) organization into effective political force.⁴⁴

⁴²Freire, p. 19.

⁴³Mortimer Arias, Growth Awareness in a Group Experience, unpublished paper, Southern Methodist University Perkins School of Theology (Fall 1976), p. 32. (emphasis added).

⁴⁴Charles Elliot, The Development Debate (New York: Friendship Press, 1971), pp. 115; 120.

The real radicalism of the radicalization of the church lies not in the skill with which it divides society, but in the vision with which it makes possible a new and redemptive reconciliation of society in a position more consistent with the demands of the gospel.⁴⁵

It follows, then that the vision needs form, and this form can begin with definitions of development which spring from concepts of justice such as those above, and from concepts of sustainability such as those discussed earlier in this chapter.

"Equations of development in terms of per capita income, gross national product, caloric consumption, industrialization, efficiency of production, national unity, etc. ...must always be judged by what they do to human beings."⁴⁶

Some of the specific effects which the above equations of development should aim to have are: meeting of physical and material necessities; increased educational and cultural opportunities; movement toward equity (economic, etc.); the ability to incorporate change without chaos,⁴⁷ and one might add, life habits which are sustainable and in harmony with the earth.

Additional goals must be envisioned on the personal level, and might be borrowed from Charlotte Clinebell's discussion of the movement toward equalitarian marriage, for it seems that achievement of equality between peoples involves dynamics similar to the following:

1. a conscious contract--effort to be aware of the other's needs, and the needs, resources and potentials of both in the relationship

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 122.

⁴⁶ Dickinson, Line, p. 94.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 42.

2. deal with feelings about becoming equal
3. need for flexibility
4. shared leadership--alternating and able to withstand conflict
5. separate identity
6. commitment⁴⁸

In closing this section on the vision of justice and development, it would be good to listen to the words of Professor Charles Birch of Sydney University, as he addressed the Nairobi Assembly of the World Council of Churches. He calls for

...positive de-development of the rich developed world....If we are to break the poverty barrier for almost two-thirds of the earth's people, if we are to continue to inhabit the earth, there has to be a revolution in the relationship of human beings one to another. The churches of the world have now to choose whether or not they become part of that revolution.⁴⁹

The changes of lifestyle, surrender of privilege may be threatening, but may hide promises--God's grace we believe is there. We have not found happiness through richness, perhaps we can learn of another way. Jesus taught us that we do not live by bread alone, but he also fed the poor, and we remember him in the breaking of the bread.⁵⁰

Amen.

IV. Summary

"There would be no human action if persons were not able to transcend themselves, to perceive their reality and understand it in order to transform it."⁵¹

⁴⁸Charlotte Clinebell, Meet Me in the Middle (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 53f.

⁴⁹David M. Paton (ed.) Breaking Barriers, Nairobi 1975 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 23.

⁵⁰Barbour, p. 193.

⁵¹Friere, p. 38.

It has been pointed out that such transformation requires a vision of sustainability and justice, a vision which has changed, and which will continue to change. In 1967 Pope Paul delivered an encyclical in which he stated that the goal of development is to do more, to seek more, to have more, and that each person is ultimately the principle agent of his/her own success or failure.⁵² These statements might be questioned today. But the Pope offered other goals which continue to stand: necessary needs should be met, persons should be taught, should have health, dignity, and rights to property should be subordinate to the common good.⁵³

Juan Mateos, writing on the message of Jesus, concludes, "we cannot remain indifferent to suffering of any kind." Conscientization is the first task, opening our eyes to the causes of evil. "We have to disprove the slogans of society, the first of which says that happiness consists in having, getting, being rich, standing in the limelight and dominating others."⁵⁴

And so one is thrown back into theology and the community. For without theology it is very hard to see why having and getting are not desirable, and without the community of believers, one stands alone against most of society and part from the strengthening body of Christ. As Edwin Schur points out, "When problems transcend the personal and interpersonal levels, so too must the solutions."⁵⁵

⁵²Pope Paul, "Population Progressio," 1967, pp. 6; 11.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 14; 16.

⁵⁴Juan Mateos, "The Message of Jesus," Sojourners VI (July 1977), 16.

⁵⁵Edwin Schur, The Awareness Trap (New York: New York Times, 1976), p. 5.

Let the discussion turn, then to the building of community, the Growth-Action group, in which the grappling with theology, oneself, and the issues facing the world may go on and lead ultimately to action.

Chapter 5

PRINCIPLES OF THE GROWTH-ACTION GROUP

I. Introduction

The reason the good can be taught is because we know it all along dimly or at a low level and its teaching is more a calling out than an instruction.¹

It has often seemed to this writer that this "calling out" is the skill which Jesus had with people--the ability to see within anyone the full child of God waiting to be born. It is felt that in Growth-Action groups this calling out can occur under good leadership, mutual supportiveness of group members, and faith that God is part of the group's history, present and future. The function of the group is many faceted. It is a growth group aimed at helping persons grow beyond currently limiting behavior. Counseling methods can be used to help free persons from blindspots and insensitivities in relationships, and help free them from their own painful lives to be aware of the pain of others around them. Freeing persons from their own self-absorbing hangups enhances mental health and helps motivate them for mission to the community and the world. "Conversely, involvement in social improvement may be the most efficient way of resolving personal problems."²

¹Lawrence Kohlberg, "Collected Papers on Moral Development and Moral Education" (Cambridge, Ma., 1973), p. 58.

²Harvey Seifert and Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Personal Growth and Social Change (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 19.

The group is study oriented, including reflection on theology and study of social problems, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 4. Yet the group should clearly not end with self-awareness and study, it is also task-oriented. Though personal re-assessment may "grab us", reconstruction of social institutions is necessary if we are to change the way we live. Oppression is "systematic, structured, and culturally reinforced."³ Therefore, the combatting of oppression must be systematic and knowledgeable, with strong commitment on the part of the participants which comes out of deepened faith understandings and mutual support. In many ways the group will resemble the style of the consciousness-raising group which the women's movement has used. "The key to all that happens, and a fundamental part of feminist CR philosophy is 'from the personal to the political'"--where the politics referred to does not mean just elections, but includes the concepts of power in society, who has it, how it is used, how one can get it.⁴

Even with such preparation to work for growth and social change, nothing will be likely to happen unless the spirit of hope and the vision of a better world are actively nurtured. The writer recently watched a film presenting a current interpretation of Jesus' parable of the widow's mite. One layman reacted with anger mixed with guilt and sadness, saying, "There's so much to do, our work is but a drop in the bucket." Yes, but this was hardly the widow's attitude! Her heart was rich with the joy of sharing what little she had, her life a long series of adding little drops to that bucket. One need not

³ Edwin Schur, The Awareness Trap (New York: New York Times, 1976), p. 4.

⁴ Harriet Perl and Gay Abarbanell, coordinators, Guidelines to Feminist Consciousness Raising (Los Angeles: GA and HP, 1976), p. 2.

be rich or powerful to have a profound effect on one's world. It is perhaps a positive prayerful condition of our hearts on which all hope and growth depend. With the widow's mite as a vision of hope, and prayer for an improved world as a foundation for growth and action, one has a catalyst to help move individuals and the Growth-Action group from despair turned inward to hope turned outward.

This chapter intends to outline some groundrules recommended for the formation of a group, and to discuss what can and cannot be expected of the group on the personal and social levels. The final chapter will offer exercises to aid the group members in overcoming resistances which arise as the group attempts to grapple with its relationship to the global community.

II. Groundrules for the Group and Its Leadership

A. Groundrules for the Formation of the Group

To paraphrase the opening statements of a recent women's CR paper for this purpose, the following might be used to answer the question, What is a Growth-Action group?

A GA group has one basic purpose: it raises members' consciousness, increases their awareness of their role in society as oppressor or oppressed, or as exploiter of the environment. It helps them break through their conditioning so that they can more completely see and understand how society has deliberately trained and prepared them to play certain roles, accept certain situations within the fabric of the culture; above all, how they are trained not to question, not to challenge, not to upset the way things are. They may already know of this intellectually; the GA group intensifies their

understanding by opening them emotionally as well. Through the GA group members will recognize that they are not alone. The key to all that happens is in the basic phrase from the personal to the political.⁵

In addition, as has been said, the GA group must have a clear transcendent dimension. It must understand, emotionally as well as rationally, that its goals are intimately tied to biblical understandings of sustainability and justice, and it must see itself as a community of servants and sojourners with God.

The above paragraphs might provide the basis for information which is disseminated through a church's channels of communication, i.e., Sunday bulletin along with pulpit announcement, signs, notices in newsletters, personal calls to likely takers, promotion at board meetings. Prospective members should be made to feel that there is "something in it for them", but also clearly understand that social response is an integral part of the intention of the group.

One key to a successful group is involvement. The two prongs of personal growth and social action must be intertwined at each step of the way.⁶ Freire reveals this in his action-reflection model of conscientization, saying that action without reflection is activism, and reflection without action is verbalization, but that the two together make up praxis, appropriate dialogue between the person and the world.⁷ The process passes from the personal to the political.

⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

⁶ Issy Pilowsky (ed.) Cultures in Collision (Hampstead Gardens, South Australia: Austraprint, 1975), p. 260.

⁷ Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p. 75.

Returning to the CR model, a number of rules are offered by Harriet Perl and Gay Abarbanell for the successful working of the group. These have been modified here for the use of the GA group, and experiences in various churches may call for further changes in particular situations. Alterations and additions to the original rules have been made on the basis of the sheet of rules for social action leaders titled "Behavioral Research and Ministerial Communication" found in Appendix B. The source of these rules is unknown.

The modified rules are as follows:

1. Plan for a definite length of time, about ten weeks, then recontract at the end of that time.
2. Have a definite membership, at the third meeting all who plan to be a permanent part of the group must plan to be there, and members should commit themselves to attend all the meetings (one absence is allowed).
3. Suggested group size is larger than six and less than twelve, making more than one group if necessary.
4. Meetings should begin and end promptly at the agreed-upon hour--this gives the sense that something important is happening (as does rule 2) and reduces inertia due to late opening and closing.
5. Confidentiality regarding personal sharing must be absolute.
6. Confrontation without genuine acceptance of the person is not allowed--i.e., members are not allowed to try to change one another through confrontation.
7. Everyone gives every speaker their complete attention.
8. All members are expected to participate, but the option to "pass" is open.
9. The place where the group meets should be carefully chosen, a pleasant room or home where the session will be uninterrupted is best.
10. Only self-serve beverages should be available.
11. Heterogeneity is healthful for the group. This is especially important in the church group in order to avoid the formation of cliques and to spread the effects of the group into various boards and committees.
12. The group should meet weekly, either in one two-hour session or two one-hour sessions, in order to allow time for focus on both the personal and the social. Under either schedule, the two aspects should be clearly integrated.⁸

⁸Perl, pp. 5f.

The meeting may begin with a lead off question and discussion which passes around the circle, allowing a few minutes for all to speak uninterrupted. The conversation should move from the personal to the political (this is part of the leaders' responsibility). The meeting ends with the announcement of the next week's discussion topic so that thought and preparation can take place during the week. Topics are chosen for their consciousness-raising potential. The leaders should determine the major theological and political points to be made and form questions around them. Good questions would seek to reveal:

- how people find themselves resisting, and why
- use games, e.g., play the oppressor and the oppressed
- patterns of oppression/unwise resource or land use
- origins of the patterns of oppression, of agricultural practices, life habits, etc.
- generally accepted conditions which are actually unjust or unsustainable
- perpetuation of stereotypes as a tactic for continuing oppression
- perpetuation of myths as a means of continuing unsustainable practices
- rich domination or well-being gained at the expense of the poor and of the environment
- how the poor are denied power at all levels of society
- how theology has/has not shaped thinking and acting
- what can the church do, what is its vision, goal?
- how the group can achieve the goal--strategy
- what people thought the group would talk about when the topic was first mentioned (in contrast to what actually happened)⁹

⁹Ibid., pp. 19-22.

One pastor who experimented with church meetings which were intended to bring growth and change outlines the following as necessary elements of such groups:

1. questions and doubts about changes must be dealt with-- free acceptance is necessary
2. the group offers support and understanding to a member facing crisis
3. personal honesty is necessary to achieve change
4. provision for the healing of relationships is needed
5. the group must provide a new interpretation of existence
6. the group must provide for an experiencing of the Christian life: the experience of ministry is a transforming event.¹⁰

Another minister who has worked with such groups advises leaders to gather together only those who mean business, and to have the group develop an in-depth theology;¹¹ still another picks up on the necessity of having specific goals, and of not getting bogged down in "why" a certain policy is oppressive or wasteful but rather give attention to the fact that it is.¹² What is needed by the group, says this writer, is a combination of perception and staying power, skill and spirit, technique and vision.¹³

¹⁰Phillip A. Anderson, Church Meetings that Matter (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1965), p. 82.

¹¹Robert C. Linthicum, Christian Revolution for Church Renewal (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), p. 159.

¹²Dieter T. Hessel, A Social Action Primer (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), pp. 60-1.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 24.

Finally, Wayne Oates¹⁴ points to Matthew 18:15-18 on anger between persons, reminding the reader that actual face-to-face confrontation with situations and perceived enemies is important for change.¹⁵ This is a reminder that strategizing is not enough. The group should meet the persons, if possible (especially in local issues), who are involved in the questions of justice and sustainability at hand. It is perhaps best for the group to start with local, attainable goals. Some members (or another group) may choose to continue on the local level, for some portion of the broader problems may be quite evident nearby. But for the purpose of this project, the most important and ultimate goal of the group is for it to respond actively to problems which presently have far-reaching effects, as those outlined in Chapter 4.

While the exact shape of the meetings will depend on the given needs and abilities of the group, each week's session should as much as possible incorporate all aspects of the group's nature: sharing and dealing with resistances, theologizing (biblical study or worship), study of current issues and the setting of goals and strategies, action on the issues which have been studied and for which strategies have been worked out.

B. Leadership

The change agent's goal is to minimize resistances and maximize resources.¹⁶ Similarly, this is the goal of the leadership

¹⁴Wayne E. Oates, Pastoral Counseling in Social Problems (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966).

¹⁵Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁶Seifert and Clinebell, p. 52.

of the GA group. One of the essential aspects of this leadership is that the leader-teacher enable members to learn how to learn.¹⁷

Without this, the purposes of the group get two hours per week of one's time, while the purposes of the rest of society have many hours of one's attention, hardly a hopeful ratio! By enabling members to raise questions and seek the answers their daily lives become integrated with all of the exploring levels of the group, the member perceives her/himself as an explorer, important and powerful in the processes of change, and the time balance swings slowly toward more commitment to God's vision of life.

In order to minimize resistances and maximize resources from the beginning, the group should work out a contract which clearly sets forth both goals of personal growth and social action. This process itself puts decision-making power, which adds to personal motivation and hope, in their hands.

The CR model outlines the leadership role as follows:

1. Leader should have goals and believe them, should be informed, care about people, be ready to become part of the group (involved) as well as providing leadership, be vulnerable.
2. Leader facilitates discussion, drawing out the quiet member and holding back talkers.
3. Leader uses the Socratic method to draw on the experience of the group.
4. Leader plays no favorites, and should be conscious to not always sit near the same persons.
5. Leader sees that all are comfortable and equally seated.
6. Leader keeps the group on the subject at hand.
7. Leader reminds the group of groundrules at the beginning of sessions.¹⁸

¹⁷Ibid., p. 42

¹⁸Perl, p. 10.

For the GA group, the leader should also:

- combine clarity, accuracy and adequacy, avoiding a trite, superficial or overly rationalized manner
- understand the roots of resistance to change
- welcome constructive conflict, allowing confrontation only when it is combined with acceptance
- allow exploration of both sides of the issue
- emphasize super-ordinate goals, keeping clear the Christian basis of understanding¹⁹

A warning is necessary for group leaders. It is that frantic activism defeats its own objectives by a lack of awareness of the complexities, subtleties, ambiguities of the issues involved, and a blindness to crucial interpersonal relationships which are the essence of effective social change. "Compulsive, insensitive reformers drive potential allies away. They estrange the very people whom they must convince."²⁰

It has been suggested that there be two leaders, one pastor and one layperson.²¹ This in itself may reduce some resistance to the pastor "doing his/her thing." It also may be the beginning of a change in lay self-perception and of the training of lay leadership.

The leaders may be helped in facilitating the group by conscious awareness of five phases identified in the process of change by Seifert and Clinebell:

¹⁹See Appendix B, Behavioral Research and Ministerial Communication; see also, Seifert and Clinebell, pp. 74-82.

²⁰Seifert and Clinebell, p. 13; similarly, Freire, p. 154-8.

²¹Personal Conversation with Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., October 27, 1977.

1. motivation and preparation
2. analysis-diagnosis of the problem and exploration of alternative goals in this context this would include identifying resistances and possible ways to deal with them
3. formulation of a strategy
4. action
5. evaluation²²

Decisions on topics for discussion, goals, courses of action and so on should as much as possible draw on the leadership capabilities of the group. Abilities will vary from group to group. Above all, the leader or leaders must keep the focus of GA the group on the integration of their spiritual/personal growth and responsible social action. As was pointed out in Chapter 2, the theology of the Bible forms the groundwork upon which the group brings together personal growth and social action. It is a crucial part of the leader's job to push the group to achieve the integration of these two areas. Awareness of their natural unity should hopefully surface as the group struggles and grows through the writing of its contract, through study of biblical passages, lifestyle evaluation, personal resistances, global study and action strategy.

III. Personal Expectations

The GA group is designed to help people deal with their own pains in more constructive ways, and by so doing, to enable them to respond to some of the problems and pains around them. It is designed

²²Seifert and Clinebell, pp. 83ff.

to aid persons in overcoming resistances to such response, and to help them strategize and theologize on appropriate action. In the group, persons should increasingly perceive themselves as part of a community, both local and global, and as individuals with the power to bring change.

Research reveals that changing a group's attitudes is often the most effective way of changing individuals. Persons are more likely to accept the opinions of groups in which they value membership and will shift positions more easily if members of their group seem to be doing so.²³

What happens when power comes to the people? They become intentional and open...

If there is a good, solid adult education program that is giving the people a thorough vision of the church as a movement in society, the decision makers will become quite open to change if responsibility is really placed in their hands.

They become more human, giving them pride in the group, a sense of dignity and worth which makes them assume responsibility.²⁴

Phillip A. Anderson, after some experience with groups similar to GA groups, found that certain changes could be expected to occur in most members of the group. He outlines those changes:

1. movement from self-centeredness to care for others,
2. from doubt about self to trust of self
3. from irresponsibility to a sense of responsibility for self and others
4. from secrecy to sharing
5. from unfreedom to freedom
6. from mistrust to trust
7. from a need to receive ministry to a concern to give ministry

²³Ibid., p. 79

²⁴Linthicum, pp. 157-8.

8. from a closed mind to a mind open to learning
9. from a fear of self, neighbor and God to love of self, neighbor and God, usually these go hand-in-hand²⁵

Seifert and Clinebell cite some similar responses, and some additional ones. They find the person becomes more self-objective, and is able to laugh at her/himself; that the group member becomes more capable of accurate, effective problem perception and solving; and that the maturing personality begins to work out a unifying approach to life which gives consistency and meaning to one's behavior.²⁶ In the GA group, this unifying approach would be centered on the developing theology and its manifestation in the world.

While the above changes can be expected in a healthy GA group, there are some things which cannot be expected to occur, at least not directly. The group cannot function as a group therapy session, nor can it provide for the deeper counseling needs of certain individuals. Persons whom the pastor suspects may need extensive counseling should be screened ahead of time and receive the necessary help. Attention must not be allowed to focus on any few persons. In the event that one or more members dominate the group with their problems, the leader(s) may need to meet separately with these members to find alternative ways of meeting their deep need. The purpose of this group is too broad to function as intended if one or a few people dominate its flow. If the group members develop high trust levels to the point where the pouring out of personal pain begins to impair the action thrust of the group's purpose, then the leader(s) will need to

²⁵Anderson, pp. 94f.

²⁶Seifert and Clinebell, pp. 61f.

call the group's attention back to their contract for growth and action and help them find some way to regain balance. Perhaps they could decide to spin off smaller extra groups for more personal sharing, or allow extra time also for the action prong of their project, or make an extra effort to limit the time given to growth discussion.

Members of the group cannot expect all their problems to disappear. They can expect to be able to cope with them more constructively. Nor can members (or leaders!) expect their resistances to melt away overnight. It can only be hoped that resistances will be reduced to the point where persons desire to explore further the issues which threaten the health of the planet and the lives of its people.

IV. Social Expectations

Certain social changes can be expected within the group and between the group and the world in which it functions. The group has a number of resources at its disposal, and these should be capitalized upon. They include:

- seeing change as desirable
- using the group for mutual support
- group pressure on social structures which may stimulate progress
- the phenomenon of "benign spiralling", when one business or other unit adopts improvement, others likely follow²⁷

The group should expect to get involved in some project shortly after its formation. The leadership should give plenty of encouragement, and get some quick successes if possible. With this,

²⁷ Ibid., p. 50.

expectations and self-respect will rise. If people are involved, leadership and decision-making skills will develop, as will a decision-making structure.²⁸

According to Dieter Hessel, the group should expect through its social action efforts to alter some community or societal structures for the common good.²⁹ He further gives the following as expectations of what will happen in the group.

An adequate social action process will respond to the need for both personal well-being and systematic change. It will concentrate on engendering styles of change agency that are personally rewarding and have staying power in the struggle to restructure social institutions and public policies. Above all, social action leaders will help people focus on effective ways to achieve decision-making power and a fair distribution of resources (i.e., to achieve political and economic justice).³⁰

The group cannot expect to change the world. Only God can do that. It can hope to act in concert with its best understanding of the purposes of God as part of the body of Christ. It can expect to run into many snags, contradictions, and opposing powers. The group may have to cope with some of these opposing powers within its own congregation. Such conflict is inevitable and never easy. It is important to deal with it openly and to engender the faith of Paul and the early Christians who faced threats no less powerful! Hear the faith of Paul as he reminds the Corinthians that the transcendent power belongs to God.

²⁸Linthicum, pp. 53-4.

²⁹Hessel, p. 23.

³⁰Ibid., p. 23.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies... For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:7-10, 6)

V. Summary

The GA group is one place where personal reflection, theological and social study, and responsible action can be fostered. It can provide personal growth, which aids the ability to involve oneself for others, and social change, which is the fruit of a growing personality. It can open new dimensions of life, of biblical understanding and relevance, and broaden the perspective with which one sees oneself as part of the global community. The group can develop a sense of mutual support, along with visions, goals, and strategies for the larger community in which it belongs.

But even within the church congregation the group is not autonomous. Its effectiveness will be greatly enhanced by habits of preaching, teaching, goal-setting and personal relationships developed by the pastor which reflect a sound theology of justice and sustainability and an awareness of global issues. The group's value will also be deepened by drawing from a broad base of the membership, as was mentioned earlier; by attempting to relate openly and consistently with those members who do not join the first group; by gently raising awarenesses on other church boards as GA group members participate in other duties; and by incorporating new visions and goals in worship and Christian education.

Effecting other boards is important, as they may have considerable decision-making power which often relates to issues the group is tackling. It is important to have worship reflect response-able goals, as many members attend worship who are not otherwise active in the church life. And it is crucial to begin to teach children, the persons whose faith and life habits and understandings are quickly forming and seldom yet hardened, the persons who often feel for others' needs and for the care of the earth most deeply, the persons who shall form the church of tomorrow.

"Major social change takes pressure with a vision."³¹ The GA group has the resources for both pressure and a vision, but not without overcoming the resistances which prevent coming together, facing conflict and achieving change. This brings the discussion to the next chapter.

³¹Ian Barbour (ed) Finite Resources and the Human Future (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976), p. 181.

Chapter 6

RESOURCES FOR HELPING PEOPLE MOVE TOWARD PERSONAL AND GLOBAL WHOLENESS

I. Introduction

The previous discussions of theological understandings, various kinds of resistances, problem awareness and the Growth-Action group concept have finally brought this writing to a unifying point, the point at which all the assumptions and thoughts provide the basis for these exercises toward wholeness.

The exercises are taken from various sources and adapted if necessary to make them appropriate for use in middle-class American churches, especially in the GA group as it attempts to grapple with individual identities, community identity, and the vision of justice and sustainability. The exercises are but samples of what can be done. They are meant to be adapted, if necessary, to fit the nature of the group which will use them, and used as springboards for leaders' own creative ideas of other exercises. The exercises have been carefully chosen to overcome, as much as possible the resistances mentioned in Chapter 3.

This chapter is divided into three portions: theological understandings, the personal struggle, and problem awareness. These divisions are at best arbitrary, as theological re-evaluation often raises important personal questions and awareness of one's ignorance of global problems. Personal problems often need a better theological

anchor and a better vision of justice and sustainability, and goal-setting for real social improvement means overcoming personal resistance and finding a theological framework! Yet, most resistances fall more into one area than into the other two.

It is important to emphasize once again that the three areas (theological understandings, personal struggle, problem awareness and action) must constantly reflect back on one another so that the group does not end up acting out of empty theology and problem ignorance, or as is more likely, so that it does not become an endless Bible study with no repercussions in the world. This integration can be aided by frequently raising such questions as these: How does this (Bible) passage speak to the present situation (using specific discussion material)? What can we do, in light of our conclusions? Has this project (just completed) reflected what we learned in our biblical study? How is my personal growth goal responsive to a) God's word and will for me, b) the overall goal of eco-justice (or some specific part of that goal)?

Leaders must be well prepared and well read in the subjects to be discussed or meditated upon. This is no less true for the meditations than for theology or social studies. It is strongly suggested that readers acquaint themselves with some basic guidelines on group meditations (such as those found in Carolyn Stahl's book, Opening to God)¹ and practice the meditations ahead of time with another person (leaders with each other or another volunteer).

Early group sessions should begin with exercises of least threat, in order not to overwhelm tentative beginners, (no one expects

¹Carolyn Stahl, Opening to God (Nashville: Upper Room, 1977).

a newborn child to ride a bicycle!) Successive meetings should challenge the group to move beyond where it is, but not expect too much too soon. If one two-hour session is spent in a long exercise which focusses primarily on one of the three areas of growth, it is important to include in the debriefing time the ways in which the group feels that what they have learned effects the other two areas.

Coming in touch with the tremendous needs of the oppressed and with the darker side of oneself can be very painful. It is important for the leaders to encourage persons to stick with this sense of suffering, but also to emphasize cause for rejoicing. There must be times of levity and release, when the group can have fun, celebrate life and God's love for all that has been created. Both celebration and suffering are part of life. To deepen them is to deepen the life experience. So the group should expect to experience both joy and suffering, and provision should be made for this in the planning of the sessions. Even as Jesus spoke of his impending death, he said to his followers,

Truly, truly I say to you...you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is in travail, she has sorrow because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being is born into the world. So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

(Jn. 16:20-22)

II. Defining Theological Perspective

A primary method of deepening theological understanding is through study and discussion of biblical material. (See Appendix I). Such a discussion should develop around prepared questions which are aimed at opening up the meaning of the passage, revealing its

implications for individuals and/or for the vision of eco-justice in the present world.

Other methods, such as meditations, study of the conclusions of others, pledges (verbal) and worship materials may also be helpful. Examples are given below under headings which either name the resistance or the application the exercise is identified with.

Resistance--Need for Sense of Transcendence.

1. Exercise of the Blossoming of the Rose--Wholeness with God and Self

Preface: "The flower has been regarded and used as a symbol of the soul, of the spiritual self, of divinity in both East and West." Visualization of the flower in the process of blooming is especially effective, conveying the idea of development which corresponds to a profound reality: the fundamental law of life that governs the functions of the human mind and of natural processes. In meditating on the opening bud, the entanglements of physical body and busy mind peel back to reveal the spiritual Center. Procedure:

Let us imagine we are looking at a rose bush. Let us visualize one stem with leaves and rosebud. The bud appears green because the sepals are closed, but at the very top a rose-colored point can be seen. Let us visualize this vividly, holding the image in the center of our consciousness.

"[sic] Now begins a slow movement; the sepals start to separate little by little, turning the points outward and revealing the rose-hued petals, which are still closed. The sepals continue to open until we can see the whole of the tender bud.

"[sic] The petals follow suit and slowly separate, until a perfect, fully opened rose is seen.

"[sic] At this stage let us try to smell the perfume of this rose, inhaling its characteristic and unmistakable scent...

"[sic] Let us now expand our visualization to include the whole rosebush, and imagine the life force that arises from the roots to the flower and originates the process of opening.

"[sic] Finally, let us identify ourselves with the rose itself....Symbolically, we are this flower, this rose. The same life that animates the universe and has created the miracle of the rose is producing in us a like, even greater miracle--the awakening and development of our spiritual being and that which radiates from it." [sic]

Comment: After the meditation is complete, the group should be asked to share what they discovered. Some may experience doubt, oscillation, resistance and so forth. These should be understood as quite acceptable and as perhaps revealing of some of the person's inner feelings at that time. Another exercise of growth images which relate to the Ground of Life is a visualization of the Cycle of Wheat: from seed and soil preparation to sowing, action of sun and rain, growth, maturing, harvesting, grinding, making of bread which becomes food and is transformed into the making of the body.² This second exercise brings forth the full significance of Jesus' parables of seed, the development of corn, the Lord's Supper, and food for the hungry. It could be used as part of a Eucharistic worship as well as by itself as part of a study session.

2. Shakertown Pledge--wholeness/unity with others.

Groups often find useful the writing and adoption of a pledge which reflects their developing theology. Such was the genesis of the Shakertown Pledge, taken by a group of Catholic and Protestant leaders meeting near Harrodsburg, Pa., in April, 1974. It speaks for itself, and is offered below either for adoption by others or as a model from which a group would formulate their own pledge.

²Roberto Assagioli, Psychosynthesis (New York: Viking Press, 1965), pp. 213-16.

THE SHAKERTOWN PLEDGE

Recognizing that the earth and the fulness thereof is a gift from our Gracious God, and that we are called to cherish, nurture, and provide loving stewardship for the earth's resources,

And recognizing that life itself is a gift, and a call to responsibility, joy and celebration,

I make the following declarations:

1. I declare myself to be a world citizen.
2. I commit myself to lead an ecologically sound life.
3. I commit myself to lead a life of creative simplicity and to share my personal wealth with the world's poor.
4. I commit myself to join with others in reshaping institutions in order to bring about a more just global society in which each person has full access to the needed resources for their physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual growth.
5. I commit myself to occupational accountability, and in so doing I will seek to avoid the creation of products which cause harm to others.
6. I affirm the gift of my body, and commit myself to its proper nourishment and physical well-being.
7. I commit myself to examine continually my relations with others, and to attempt to relate honestly, morally, and lovingly to those around me.
8. I commit myself to personal renewal through prayer, meditation, and study.
9. I commit myself to responsible participation in a community of faith.³

Resistance--Separation of Church and State

In Chapter 3 it was stated that persons often do not support social action efforts because they have been shown no Scriptural basis

³Report of the Aspen Interreligious Consultation, Global Justice and Development (Washington: Overseas Development Council, October 1974), p. 97.

for such action, and that often the old phrase "separation of church and state" is thrown out as a red flag to stop all action (and all thought!) about reaching out to change anything.

After the group has begun to develop a theology and a basic understanding of some of the present dangers humankind faces, it may wish to develop a statement patterned after those of other groups which have spoken out about how Christians do indeed have a call to address the "state." The following excerpts and outline are taken from such a statement from the United Methodist Task Force on World Hunger, and could provide a helpful beginning for the group's (congregation's) own proposal.

To a degree unprecedented in history, the human family cries out for bread and justice. Today, millions of men, women and children face hunger and starvation. Apathy, greed, injustice and other continuing circumstances which have victimized them will, if unchecked, condemn many millions more to the same misery. Our understanding of the witness of Jesus Christ calls us to respond to their needs. In the name of the living God we... commit ourselves to the struggle for food and justice, and for a global society where all persons receive their equitable share of the earth's bounty as a basic human right.

(Outline of areas of needed involvement, with a statement after each)

1. Powerlessness and exploitation
2. Widespread abuse of land, forests, water and soil resources
3. Low regard for agriculture and lack of agricultural leadership and research
4. Military spending and agricultural development
5. Consumer habits of individuals in affluent societies
6. Rapidly accelerating growth of population
7. Environmental changes
8. Denial of the rights and proper role of women

(Theological base for action)

"God is creator of all, and loves and cares for all God has made... The Word made flesh in Jesus Christ is the good news: God loves us and all humankind... Yet we grossly misunderstand and fail to grasp God's grace if we imagine that the Sovereign Lord of all overlooks, condones or easily

tolerates our indifference to the plight of our neighbors, our greed and selfishness, our systems of injustice and oppression... As Holy Spirit, God is at work in history today, refashioning lives, tearing down unjust structures, restoring community, engendering faith, hope and love, and holding before us the vision of God's Kingdom... Without a vision of the future, we shall continue to drift toward disaster... We propose three arenas of response to the challenge of world hunger, each should be followed by specifics :

1. Services and resources leading to the alleviation of the basic causes of hunger in the United States and elsewhere

- immediate relief, especially in disaster situations
- programs leading to self-development of people

2. Lifestyles

- redefine humanness, ownership, work
- develop meaningful symbols and worship
- develop new visions of appropriate lifestyle
- recapture meaning of stewardship on God's earth
- commit ourselves to study
- use/create networks of action and support
- work out ways to affect public policy

3. Public policy and legislation--action/education efforts toward

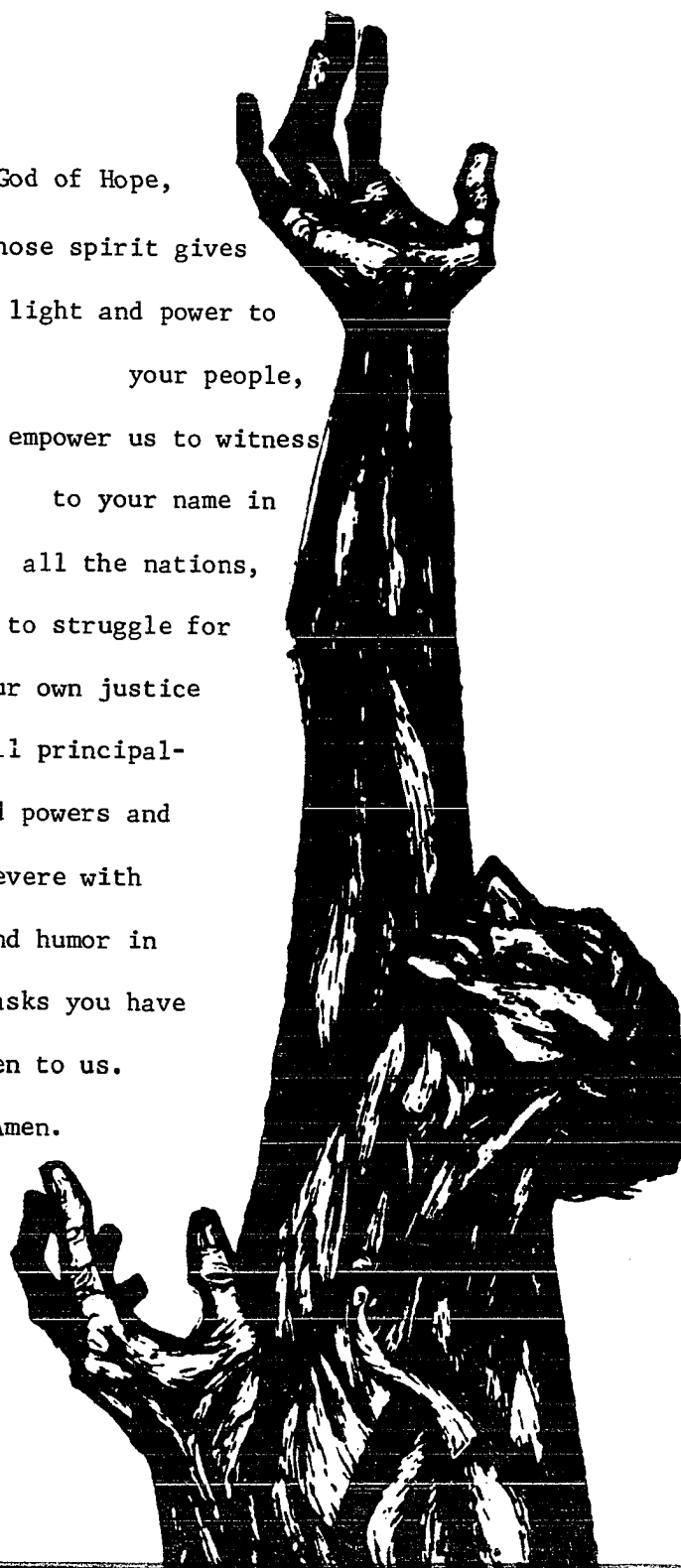
- food as a right
- indigenous agricultural economic development
- role of higher education
- use of natural resources
- economic systems
- just trade relationships
- heritage of colonial attitudes and practices
- military arms limitation
- international food reserve
- resources planning
- energy organization
- multi-national organizations
- family planning⁴

Application--Prayer

The prayer on the following page was adopted as part of worship at the 1975 World Council of Churches Assembly in Nairobi. Because of

⁴"United Methodist Response to World Hunger," Daily Christian Advocate (date unknown)

God of Hope,
whose spirit gives
light and power to
your people,
empower us to witness
to your name in
all the nations,
to struggle for
your own justice
against all principal-
ities and powers and
to persevere with
faith and humor in
the tasks you have
given to us.
Amen.



its use by people from all corners of the globe, and because of its beauty, it is offered here as a prayer to be used by the group in worship settings, as part of one or more meetings, as meditation or for other creative purposes. Through the history of the prayer, the group may not only sense a deep calling, but also solidarity with the broader community of which it was, and is, a part.⁵

III. Personal Resistances--Lowering the Dividing Wall

Remember that you Greeks were at one time separated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But Christ Jesus is our peace who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility. (Eph. 2:12,14)

Surely the Greeks of Ephesus to whom Paul wrote these words had not guessed (apparently still did not know!) that God would act through one human being to bring the end of hostilities, of resistances between groups. Their source of welfare came in disguise, or rather, in a guise they could not see!

And so it is that many resistances, dividing walls between groups, between what is and what can be, remain unmoved. The future good cannot be seen, the fertile void is too feared to be explored. Whether the resistance be fear of change, identity loss, loneliness, fear of conflict or pain, or something other, there is meaning and strength, indeed, treasure to be found if one can risk the fertile void, that area of the inner self in which God's spirit works unseen to lower that dividing wall of resistance.

As was mentioned in Chapter 3, one way to remove the resistance

⁵David M. Paton (ed.) Breaking Barriers, Nairobi 1975 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), p. xii.

is by focussing on it, experiencing it and letting it become what it is, part of oneself. This is done by imaging the resistance (say, as a wall) and letting it speak. By doing so the resistance changes from being only a burden, and is seen as the potential strength which it is, a strength which becomes purposive instead of stagnant, adding to life instead of subtracting from it.⁶

Resistance--Identity loss

One of the questions so important to Moses and the prophets was, Who am I? In today's society of rapid social change the sense of identity is often confused or lost, making for resistance to change due to fear of further identity confusion. Finding a ground of meaning in one's life can help establish a sense of identity and give one a Center from which to move more freely. Here follows a meditation suggestion on this theme.

Reading: Matt. 13:45-46

Biblical note: Merchants in search of fine pearls were likely to travel far distances, perhaps to the Persian Gulf or even to India. The search was often long and intense.

Meditation: Close your eyes; sit straight and comfortably. Take three slow deep breaths to relax....Now, imagine yourself in a meadow or grassy area...feel the warmth of the sun moving through your entire being....Look around and see what is there with you....Walk around a bit to get a sense of where you are.... Now notice a path, and another path...and still another path. All the paths are gentle uphill slopes...you become aware that you are searching for something of great value....Following your intuition and God's guidance, choose your path and do whatever is necessary in order to find that for which you are searching....Let yourself experience any struggles or barriers along the way...also bring in any help or assistance you want.... Finally you find this thing of great value for which you have been searching....Observe closely what this is....You discover that you must sell or get rid of everything else in your life

⁶Erving and Miriam Polster, Gestalt Therapy Integrated (New York: Vintage, 1973), pp. 53-4.

if you are to obtain this one thing....Become aware of your inner experience as you make this discovery....If you decide to let go of everything else, follow through with that exchange and go back down the path to the meadow, becoming aware of how you feel about your decision....Let yourself stay in the meadow for awhile....When you feel ready, open your eyes.⁷

This meditation should be debriefed by inviting those who wish to do so to share their experience.

Application--Celebration

This meditation suggestion is meant for use when members feel that they have grown or accomplished some worthwhile goal through great struggle. It might be used alone or as part of a service of thanksgiving.

Reading: Psalm 57:7-11

Biblical note: "The poet of this psalm expresses enormous relief, for the turmoil of his soul has passed....One both sings and cries to God out of one's depths. A moment ago the psalmist was in despair; at this point, the psalmist sings with joy, strength and faith."⁸

Meditation: Develop a meditation around appropriate points of struggle through which the individual or group as a whole has come, use symbolic language and images, but avoid being too specific. Have the group offer the struggle and the celebration on an altar to God and have them experience God's acceptance before returning to their starting place.

The experience may be shared if people wish. This meditation might also be used imaginatively as a group enters a struggle, fearing (and therefore resisting) possible conflict with self or with others ahead.

A moth or butterfly which is freed artificially from its cocoon will die, because it must experience that struggle of birth in

⁷Carolyn Stahl, Opening to God (Nashville: Upper Room, 1977) p. 103.

⁸Ibid., p. 105.

order to gain the strength to survive. Similarly one could compare the strain of human birth and growth, as Jesus told Nicodemus of the second birth, the birth in Spirit which was necessary if he was going to enter the Kingdom of God. (Jn. 3:1f) These images could be developed into meditations relating to conflict and celebration of new life.

Resistance--Maintaining, justifying, conforming

As was pointed out earlier, moral development often gets "stuck" at the stage where it demands rules and commandments rather than abstract principles such as the Golden Rule. At the commandment stage, one is rigid, and may use commandments to justify rather than liberate. This is what Muriel James and Louis Savary have identified in Transactional Analysis terms⁹ as the Parent Believer. Adult and Child Believers have certain characteristics, too, where the Adult Believer corresponds more with the "principled" stage of moral development.

James and Savary give the following chart and questions as an exercise for helping persons understand their style of believing and hopefully bring it to the Adult stage, where alternatives can be evaluated reflectively and openly.

⁹The terms Parent, Adult, Child, as described first by Eric Berne, refer to three states of ego function. The Parent ego state is authoritative, modelled after one's parents/authority figures. It tends to be nonperceptive, noncognitive, an arbitrary basis for decisions, a repository of traditions. The Adult ego state is a non-emotional, information gathering state. It functions along logical lines of observation and evaluation, and makes predictions based on the data of external conditions. The Child ego state is reflected in childlike stance, behavior expressions. It is the ego state of strong emotional expression such as joy, anger, rage, delight. It is the source of spontaneity, sexuality, creative change and joy. Claude M. Steiner, Scripts People Live (New York: Bantam, 1974), pp. 33-37.

P-A-C BELIEVERS AND CHURCH ACTIVITY

BELIEVERS	General mode of acting	Source of moral and ethical responsibility	Primary religious motivation	Characteristic way of talking about religion
PARENT BELIEVERS	Judgmental (obeying and enforcing rules) and nurturing (caring for needs)	Traditional control simply carries out commands	Duty, obedience to the church	Tends to absolutize, "always", "never", "must", "should"
CHILD BELIEVERS	Repressed, learned, impulsive or intuitive emotional response	Response to feelings and conditioning, does whatever natural or adapted feelings dictate	Impulse, curiosity, approval or disapproval	Tends to use words laden with emotion
ADULT BELIEVERS	Reasonable, clearly evaluation alternatives	Internal control, accepts full responsibility for behavior	Insight, reflectively formulates personal decisions	Discusses experiences as unique and relative to many different factors

QUESTIONS

Make a list of five church activities that go on in your church.

Would the Parent side in you participate in each activity? How does the Child in you feel toward each activity? Independent of your feelings, what data do you have about the pros and cons of each activity?

Which of your ego states seem most involved in each activity? Does your involvement reflect anything about your religious beliefs? What?¹⁰

¹⁰Muriel James and Louis M. Savary, The Power at the Bottom of the Well (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), pp. 47-8.

Resistance--Habits and media

Resistance may come from sheer force of habit. It may also come from re-inforcements of notions perpetuated by the existing power structure through newspapers, radio, magazines, television, social conversation and many other sources (including one's own stereotypes, "tapes").

Here are several suggestions of how to begin shaking these assumptions and habits:

- have the group contract to make certain changes in habit each week and check up weekly on the progress, always attempting to enlarge the degree of significance of the change; also replace the things given up with purposeful substitutes
- critically discuss advertising claims, underlying assumptions of news articles, movies, etc.
- arrange for the group to have face-to-face exposure with poverty, hunger, unemployment, injustice, exploitive environmental use, whatever issue needs insight
- make alternative reading materials available (e.g., "Corporate Examiner," in contrast with "U.S. News and World Report")
- have members develop lists comparing biblical passages with common current attitudes--do they agree or disagree?
- use your imagination!

IV. Raising Problem Awareness and Achieving Goals

We will not identify with the oppressed or seek to change injustice until we feel, see, smell and hear their pain. "The people I know who have made any radical shift in the way they live have had some exposure to poverty on a constant basis."¹¹

¹¹Elizabeth O'Connor, The New Community (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), p. 22.

As was the case for resistances related to theology, resistances related to problem awareness in great part must be tackled by filling in the information gaps. Though leaders should plan ahead, decide on topics and questions, and challenge erroneous notions (or research questions), members of the group should increasingly become involved in this process themselves. They may be encouraged to take on personal areas of interest and expertise in the form of personal projects of study. They may help recruit speakers, raise questions, and always share new information and ideas. In short, they must learn how to learn with a prophetic eye to the world in which they live, so that eventually every hour of every day is in some way affecting their faith development and actions.

Resistance--Immobility and guilt

Perhaps two of the biggest problems for a group are perceiving themselves as truly called by God to serve God, as capable of meeting the pharaoh-like powers, and as forgiven for running away from God's call for so long with excuses. The two meditation suggestions which follow prepare the way through these resistances to action.

1. Receiving Mission

Reading: Exod. 3:1-5, 7-8a, 10-11; or Isaiah 6:1-8

Biblical note: Earlier in his life Moses showed his readiness to sacrifice for his people. He killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew slave and then fled, finding refuge in the land of Midian. At the time of this passage, he has just adjusted to the life of a shepherd. Now he meets God. Angel means 'messenger,' so a messenger of the Lord appeared. The flame indicates that God is actually present....It is clear that this is God's project, not one left to Moses, and God enables Moses' modesty to be transformed into the humility of faith.

Meditation: Include the following in the guided images-- you are in a familiar place outdoors, you notice something that catches your awed attention, you sense God's presence, God speaks your name, tells you to take off your shoes for it is holy ground, God names a concern which God has seen in the lives of some group of people may be specific to a group with which the members plan to work, God informs you that you should do something, ask questions and share your fears with God, hear God tell you that God is with you always, listen for God's guidance, feel this, say anything more you need to say and listen for God's response, return to your awareness of your familiar place.¹²

Debrief: Share with another person or with the group, or have persons draw out their experience on a piece of paper, have persons remind themselves especially of the guidance they received for action.

2. Leaven

Reading: Luke 13:20-21 or Matt. 13:33

Biblical note: Leaven was used as a symbol of evil in many of the Jewish writings and elsewhere in the New Testament.... However, the reference here is to the small amount of yeast necessary to make an enormous amount of dough. This probably was interpreted at the time as a prophecy about growth of the church and the spreading of the gospel.

Comment: Think of the goal which the group wishes to achieve as the dough which is to be leavened.

Meditation: Include the following, adapting as necessary-- image of a place for you to undertake the task of bread-making, image all the steps of this process from putting the yeast in warm water onward, keep in touch with the power of the yeast and its permeation of the whole dough--imagine what qualities you need as yeast, what you hope to do, and what you need to grow--go through time and see the action of the yeast, finish your meditation as it comes to you.

Debrief: Was God's spirit in your awareness of yourself as yeast? Have the group share what they experienced.

This meditation could also be used daily by group members. A word representing the leaven's activity can be placed in the center of a sheet of paper, and as other words relate to it, they can be added around it like the spokes of a wheel. It may take two months or more for this image to really begin having effect on one's life.¹³

¹³Ibid., p. 57-8.

The following strategy questions are given in Dieter Hessel's

A Social Action Primer.

1. What is the particular social problem confronting us?
2. Why does this problem exist?
3. What should we do about it? (What is the action goal)?
4. How shall we move to attain it? (What are the action handles)?
5. What are the action results?¹⁴

Other questions for planning are offered by Seifert and Clinebell in Personal Growth and Social Change.

- What are the driving forces for change?
- ... the resisting forces?
- What are the power relationships involved?
- Who are possible allies and opponents?
- What are their motivations and resources?
- What individuals or groups might change their positions?
- What is the decision-making process within these groups?
- What positions are influential leaders likely to take?
- Who can influence whom? Where are the leverage points?
- What coalitions of power are possible?
- What new organization is necessary? staff? finances?
- When should we act to secure the best timing?
- What is the unique contribution our group can best make?¹⁵

¹⁴Dieter T. Hessel, A Social Action Primer (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), p. 68.

¹⁵Harvey Seifert and Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Personal Growth and Social Change (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 88.

Resistance--Problem perception

Thomas Fenton has compiled a very useful book titled Education for Justice, in which is gathered a number of exercises to help groups deal with justice issues.¹⁶ Similar exercises could be used to raise awareness on issues of sustainability. The following exercises are taken from this collection as examples of ways in which resistances due to faulty problem perception may be addressed.

¹⁶Thomas P. Fenton (ed.) Education for Justice (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1975). See also another excellent resource which has come to the writer's attention recently, William E. Gibson, A Covenant Group for Lifestyle Assessment (New York: United Presbyterian Program Agency, 1978), available from: United Presbyterian Church, USA, Office of Social Education, Room 1101, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, New York 10027; United Methodist Church, Discipleship Resources, P.O. Box 840, Nashville, Tenn. 37202; United Church of Christ Hunger Program, 16th Floor, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, New York 10027; Episcopal Church Center, Hunger Office, 815 Second Avenue, New York, New York 10017.

I. TITLE: COMMUNICATION--ONE-WAY AND TWO-WAY

OBJECTIVE: To bring out different views of the same reality and to demonstrate how people view reality from different perspectives.

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: 45 minutes.

MATERIALS: Two sheets with diagrams of squares.

PROCEDURE: Ask one of the participants to come to the front of the room and turn facing away from the group. Select another to act as observer to keep notes on the reaction of the participants.

Give the demonstrator the illustration on Chart I and ask her to study it carefully. In the meantime have the rest of the group take out a pencil and sheet of paper.

The demonstrator is to give verbal instructions to the group on how to draw the squares (on Chart I). The demonstrator can give only verbal instructions and she must remain with her back to the group. No one is permitted to ask any questions or to make any comments.

When the demonstrator is finished, the participants are asked to mark on their paper how many squares they think they drew correctly. Ask for a show of hands to give the group some idea of the estimated accuracy. "How many think they drew 5 squares correctly? 4? etc."

Then show them the master illustration of chart I (it would be helpful to have this chart on a sheet of newsprint or posterboard). Stress the point that each square must relate to the others precisely the way in which it is illustrated on the chart in order to be counted correct. Ask for another show of hands and compare the results with the earlier estimates of accuracy.

Before any discussion of the results, have the demonstrator face the class and this time give her Chart II. Once again she is to give the rest of the group instructions on how to duplicate the illustration. This second time, however, the demonstrator may do anything she thinks would be helpful except showing the chart to the group. The group may stop her at any time to ask questions or to seek clarifications.

When the group is satisfied that they have completed the task, ask for a show of hands to indicate estimated accuracy. Show them Chart II, ask again for a show of hands, and then compare the results with the earlier estimates.

PROCESSING THE EXERCISE: The observer is invited to begin the discussion of the entire exercise by offering his comments on the reactions of the demonstrator and of the participants during the time spent on Charts I and II.

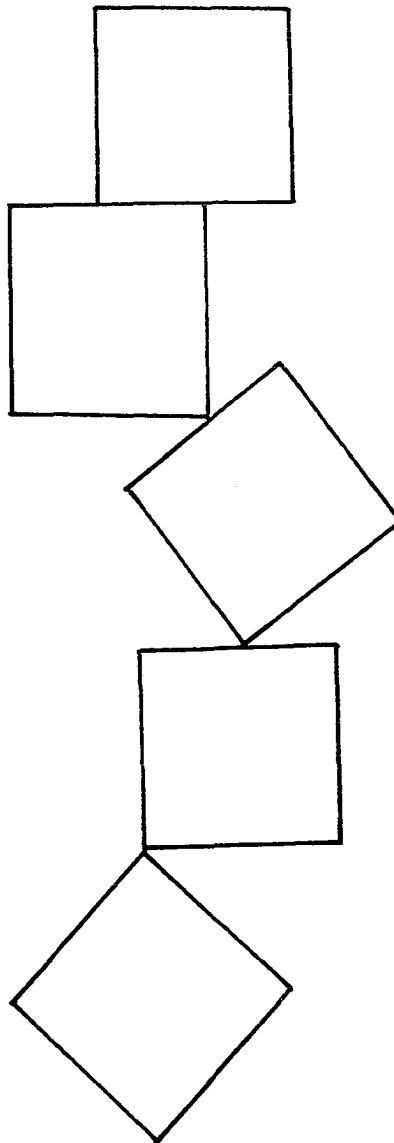
The discussion may be brought to a close with a quick summary: One-way communication is often quicker and less accurate. The level of confidence on the part of the listener is lower. Two-way communication, on the other hand, takes more effort on the part of the demonstrator, but the results are more likely to be accurate and the level of trust is much higher.

You might then ask the group to discuss any of their own personal experiences with one and two-way communication. In what ways was the dynamic of the exercise similar to a real-life experience of any of the participants? How was it different?

The participants should then be encouraged to examine the problem of communication on a global level. China-U.S. relations might be used as a case study. What distortions colored our understanding of China in the twenty years during which we had no substantive relations with the Chinese? How are things different now? What countries do we still refuse to communicate with? Why? With what results?

Communication--One-Way and Two-Way

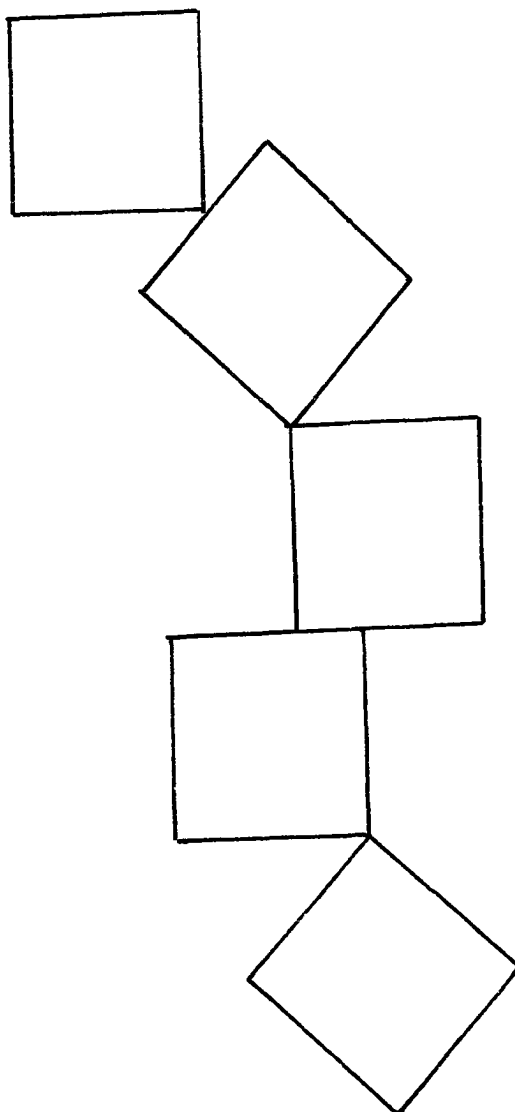
CHART I: One-way communication



INSTRUCTIONS: Study the figures above. With your back to the group, you are to instruct the members of the group as to how to draw them. Begin with the top square and describe each in succession, taking particular note of the relationship of each to the preceding one. No questions are allowed.

Communication--One Way-Two Way

CHART II: Two-way communication



INSTRUCTIONS: Study the figures above. Facing the group, you are to instruct the members as to how to draw them. Begin with the top square and describe each in succession, taking particular note of the relation of each to the preceding one. Answer all questions from participants and repeat if necessary.¹⁷

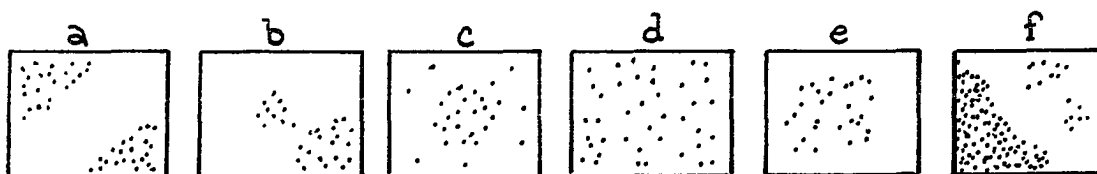
¹⁷Ibid., pp. 209-213; 235-240.

II. TITLE: WHAT'S IN A DOT?

OBJECTIVE: To help participants visualize the ways in which they see reality and articulate their hopes for the future.

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY: One Hour.

MATERIALS: Charts or a chalkboard with the following diagrams:



PROCEDURE: This exercise can be used to focus attention on a number of different realities--U.S. society, United States relationships with the rest of the world, social divisions within the Third World, or others.

Choose the reality you would care to focus the group's attention on and ask each of the participants to select the one diagram that is most expressive of that reality. Do not interpret the dots or the diagrams yourself. Let the participants see the dots however they would like.

When the group has had enough time, ask for volunteers to make their choices known to the group. Have them explain why they selected the one particular diagram and give a concrete illustration to support the choice. (For example, "I chose Diagram A because it is suggestive of polarization and that is descriptive of the state of racial relations here in the United States.")

You might ask if others selected the same diagram and then compare explanations and illustrations. As participants make known their choices you could keep a running record on the board. Which diagrams were not selected? Why not? Can any of the participants offer a diagram other than A to F that would be suggestive of the reality under consideration? Ask them to refer to the related assignment in the Workbook on page 15.

Having fully discussed the implications of the group's choice you could then turn to the future. Ask the participants to look again at the diagrams and choose one that best describes, for example, either

- how the United States will be in the year 2,000; or,
- how I would like the United States to be in 2,000.

Your choice of either of the above will surface different data for the group's reflection. Continue with discussion questions as above.¹⁸

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 221.

III. TITLE: CHARITY/JUSTICETEACHER OVERVIEW:

Although charity may be the first characteristic that comes to mind to describe the Church's social involvement, justice is the dominant theme of the Church's social teaching. The Roman Synod says that the Church has the right and the duty "to proclaim justice on the social, national and international level, and to denounce instances of injustice."

Barbara Ward in her commentary on Pope Paul's encyclical The Development of Peoples notes that "charity for all of its immediacy and effectiveness remains an arbitrary factor. The rich man may give. Again, he may not. He expects, even if only subconsciously, suitable gratitude."

The Development of Peoples, without denigrating charity, clearly concentrates on the obligation to pursue justice, even elaborating the structural mechanisms that should be changed to effect more just relations between persons and nations.

This module is designed to focus on the Christian response in justice to global needs.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To contrast characteristics of charity and justice (Backgrounder).
2. To highlight the arbitrary dimension of present U.S. response to global needs (Pre-Test).
3. To suggest models for action in justice ("The Rent Strike Model" and the "Mexico Model").

TEACHER ACTIVITY:

1. Take Pre-Test and consider the biases reflected in the pattern of your answers.
2. Read Backgrounder.
 - a) List current situations in U.S. calling for a charitable response.
 - b) Make a similar list of those calling for a response in justice.

c) Prepare a similar set of lists using current global situations.

3. Assemble materials from various agencies involved in overseas activities. Study them to determine whether charity or justice dominates the thrust of their activities and appeal. For example,

ACTION (merger of VISTA and the Peace Corps)
806 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 22525

American Freedom from Hunger Foundation
1717 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

Catholic Relief Services
350 Fifth Avenue
New York City, New York 10001

Latin America Bureau
1430 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

League of Red Cross Societies
1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland

United Nations Development Programme
United Nations, New York 10017

U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, D.C. 20523

World Bank
1818 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20433

World Council of Churches Fund to Combat Racism
475 Riverside Drive
New York City, New York 10027

4. Repeat 1-3 with group, allowing for discussion time, study time, etc.

PRE-TEST:*

1. More than \$22 billion worth of American food surpluses has been provided to the less developed countries (LDC's). Of this amount what percentage has been given to them without charge?

- a. less than 25% b. about 50% c. all of it

2. Of the following programs, which phase has had the greatest increase in funding by U.S. aid in recent years?

- a. Population Control b. Peace Corps c. Contributions to United Nations' Agencies

3. U.S. aid programs in 1971 spent about \$260 million directly in foreign countries. That same year the poor countries paid back to the U.S. on past loans

- a. nothing b. about \$100 million c. more than \$300 million

4. Compared to other aid-giving nations, the terms (interest rates and time for repayment) of U.S. government loans to the LDC's are becoming

- a. tougher b. easier

5. Of the total Federal Budget, about how much of each \$1 is spent for economic aid to the LDC's?

- a. less than 2¢ b. about 50¢ c. more than 50¢

6. Out of each dollar America provides the poor nations for the purchase of goods, how much money actually leaves the U.S.?

- a. less than 1¢ b. about 50¢ c. more than 75¢

7. Which of the following factors accounts for the largest amount of U.S. dollars leaving the country?

- a. Defense expenditures b. Foreign aid
c. Private overseas investment d. American tourists' spending

8. Which accounts for the least amount of U.S. dollars leaving the country?

- a. Defense expenditures b. Foreign aid
c. Private overseas investment d. American tourists' spending

*(This could, and should be re-written using current figures and questions.)

9. The United Nations has set 1% of a nation's wealth (GNP) as a target for ranking the rich nations' contributions to the poor countries. In 1970, out of 16 nations, the U.S. ranked:

- a. 15th b. 8th c. 1st

10. Of the total government development assistance provided to the poorer nations by the rich nations, the U.S. provides about what percentage?

- a. 40% b. 60% c. 80%

11. The cost to each American of the U.S. foreign aid program, including Food for Peace, Peace Corps, etc., is equivalent to:

- a. less than a carton of cigarettes each month
b. about 10 cartons of cigarettes each month
c. more than 50 cartons of cigarettes each month.

ANSWERS: 1, a; 2, a; 3, c; 4, a; 5, a; 6, a;
7, d; 8, b; 9, a; 10, a; 11, a.

SOURCE: U.S. Agency for International Development, "Introduction to the FY1973 Development and Humanitarian Assistance Program Presentation to Congress."

BACKGROUND

When the Church moves into the field of justice, the need to distinguish between justice and charity becomes crucial. For many Christians there is a tendency to confuse justice and charity. However, the practice of charity and the pursuit of justice are not the same. This is not to say that one is superior to the other. Each is essential in combatting the ills that afflict mankind, but each has its distinct characteristics.

One characteristic of an act of charity is that it is occasioned by an accidental event, a so-called act of God--flood, famine, earthquake; or an individual tragedy resulting from such things as fire or highway fatalities. To provide charity in such cases is to assist the victims of large-scale calamities or personal tragedies. The history of the Church in this field is probably second to no other institution in the world.

A second characteristic of an act of charity is spontaneity; in it there is no attempt to identify and cope with the causes of catastrophies. Relief measures are not designed to survey the root causes of disaster as such. Rather, the charitable donation is intended to move quickly to the victim.

Another characteristic of charity is that it is essentially a temporary provision. The victims must be provided immediate assistance to satisfy basic human needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter; but, the expectation is that conditions will return to normal and relief measures will no longer be needed.

A fourth mark of the charitable act is that it is non-controversial. Admittedly, donors are reluctant to give their money merely to vague goodwill projects, but when victims of natural calamities or individual tragedies are clearly identified, the dominant question usually is not whether to respond to the needy, but rather, how much should be given.

The actions of the Good Samaritan are a classic example of the charitable response. The parable is silent about any attempts by the Samaritan to survey the root causes of highway banditry in Palestine, or to determine why the particular traveler had been victimized, or to analyze the cause of clerical indifference to human tragedy. The Samaritan, confronted by the victim on the roadside, promptly provided him immediate, temporary, and adequate assistance.

This is not to imply that the Church or Church people should abandon acts of charity, but rather, that these acts of charity must be done in such a way that the charitable act does not negate the demands of justice. For example, to aid the victims of natural disasters is worthy; however, if this is the only way in which the Church ministers to human needs, then it has failed. Charity and justice must complement each other. Given the human condition, the

charitable act can become a substitute for the pursuit of justice which is often a more controversial, but hardly a less Christian, mode of action.

To deal with the issues of justice demands a different set of responses. Conditions of injustice are not accidents. They cannot be ascribed as acts of God; rather, they result from the acts of men. To relieve the victims of injustice demands that the root causes of injustice be identified and removed. This requires persistent and concerted effort; and short-term, sporadic efforts are both inappropriate and ineffective for such a mission.

The victims of injustice frequently live in conditions similar to those suffering from the effects of major disasters: wretched housing, inadequate food, insufficient medical care, marginal educational facilities. The scene, on its face, may appear to call for acts of charity, important in their own way. However, the search for root causes is likely to uncover not an isolated event, but rather, institutionalized conditions which violate the human dignity of groups of persons. To fail to grapple with this institutionalized violence is to fail to be allied with and to minister to those who hunger and thirst for justice.

The episodes in Exodus of Moses liberating his people aptly illustrate efforts to remove root causes of injustice. Moses did not appeal to Pharaoh for teams of Egyptian volunteers with medicine and food to enter Jewish forced-labor camps. On the contrary, he challenged the institutional injustices of Pharaoh's system, even disobeying unjust Egyptian laws; and ultimately he led his people to a new freedom and a new identity as a people.¹⁹

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 235-240.

V. Summary

The exercises, prayers, meditations collected here will hopefully be the beginning of a vision, the vision of a just and sustainable world, a vision of what it means to be a nurturer instead of an exploiter, a servant of God instead of an oppressor of God's people.

There are numerous good resources which group leaders and members may draw upon, and much more material in the sources cited here than there could possibly be room for in this project.

Who are we? What shall we do?

These are the questions which church persons are called to ask and to answer with a sense of purpose, knowing that God will reveal answers and provide the strength to fulfill the Divine Vision for the earth and its people.

Let justice roll down like waters
and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.
(Amos 5:24)

In the seventh year there shall be a
sabbath of solemn rest for the land...
for the land is mine; for you are
strangers and sojourners with me.
(Lev. 25:4, 23)

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

The problem which this project has attempted to address is that the Christian community frequently resists its calling to seek a just and sustainable society. It was the thesis of this writer that Growth-Action groups could be used to clarify persons' potentials as change agents, and to formulate and initiate action toward a just and sustainable society.

It was found that the church is playing a small role in the national consciousness of ethical issues of eco-justice. Yet the church is called to see the world in radical ways and to act out of that radicalism, attempting to follow God's will. Very often the changes which come with a radical stance are anticipated as losses, but it was pointed out that they could rather be seen as new and exciting opportunities, likened to the changes in a kaleidoscope where all the old pieces produce a picture which is startlingly new and alive.

In the chapter on theology, it was concluded that all persons are still "becoming," and that God has a stake in that becoming. It was also seen that Christians are called to be purposeful in addressing questions of eco-justice, learning to distinguish between the gods and symbols of the world and the God of creation. The result of increased theological understanding at the heart as well as the head level should be the ability to respond to God's call, "Here am I, send me."

In Chapter 3, three areas of resistances were outlined, theological, emotional, and educational, and it was seen that belonging to a group whose purpose is the pursuit of deeper faith and commitment is one very helpful means for the Christian to overcome these resistances.

Next there was discussion in Chapter 4 which outlines some basic eco-justice problems and the goals which should be sought in correcting them. These goals have changed, and will continue to change, the only unchanging thing is that Christians cannot be indifferent to suffering, the vision must be kept clear of a just and sustainable world. It was said that a good theology, personal awareness and a sense of community can help form and support this vision.

The fifth chapter described some of the aspects of the GA group which make it a place for personal and social change, broadening one's perspective and vision of oneself as in unity with all the world. The overall effectiveness of the group, it was said, can be enhanced by its careful integration into the total life of the church, especially into education at all levels.

The final chapter offered some methods of meditation, prayer, worship, goal-setting and general study which might be used and adapted in many ways to help the group achieve the changes it wishes and clarify the vision of a whole earth.

This writer concludes that the Growth-Action group can model itself after the combined experiences of growth groups and social action groups, whose experiences provided the outlines given in Chapter 5; that it can be a viable model for church and personal

renewal; that it can pool resources to motivate social change and increase public awareness of global issues; that it is a forum for deepening the experience of God's presence, of life, of joy and sorrow. It remains necessary to test this thesis with GA groups to discover its degree of success and the points at which it needs modification.

Further research is needed on the nature of resistances and the ways to overcome them. More precise theologizing needs to be done, especially in the area of sustainability. Thoughtful study should be done on developing new models of lifestyle as a vision for the group. Study will always be necessary to keep up with the changing global picture, the location and nature of oppression of God's people and the degradation of the Lord's earth.

Out of these fingers of continued study there should emerge awareness of the problems we face, a picture of the earth as it can be: whole, healthy, peopled with humans whose first goal is mutual cooperation; a vision of ourselves, each and every one of us, as persons loved by God, responsible to God, supported by a Deeper Reality which neither moth nor rust can destroy--a vision of ourselves as Christ sees us, as the child, woman or man we can become!

Hymn of the Universe

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Lord...
 you who are divine energy
 and living, irresistible might:
 since of the two of us
 it is you
 who are infinitely the stronger,
 it is you who must set me ablaze
 and transmute me into fire
 that we may be welded together
 and made one.

Christ consumes with his glance
 my entire being.
 And with that same glance,
 that same presence,
 he enters those
 who are around me
 and whom I love.
 Thanks to him therefore
 I am united with them,
 as in a divine milieu...
 and I can act upon them
 with all the resources of my being.

To read the gospel
 with an open mind
 is to see
 beyond all possibility of doubt
 that Jesus came to bring us...
 not only a new life
 superior to that we are conscious of,
 but also...a new physical power
 of acting upon our temporal world....

If it is true
 that the development of the world
 can be influenced
 by our faith in Christ,
 then to let this power
 lie dormant within us
 would indeed be unpardonable.¹

¹Mark S. Link, Still Point (Chicago: Argus, 1971), p. 53,
 citing Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Hymn of the Universe (New York:
 Harper & Row, 1965).

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

- Gen. 1 (esp. 1:27) re: creation and food
 3:1ff. the Fall, humans reaching beyond the human
 3:19, dust to dust
 8:22 natural cycles (promise after the flood)
 9:6-7 be fruitful...
 11:1-9 Tower of Babel
- Ex. 3-4 Moses' call
 6:5-7 exodus of oppressed from Egypt, led by God
 20:2 exodus
 23:6, 10-11, 16 poor, fallowing harvest feast
- Lev. 19:9-10 leaving gleanings for the poor
 25 (esp. 4, 8, 10, 23, 27) Year of Jubilee, you are sojourners
 27:30-32 tithing crops/stock to the Lord
- Num. 18:21-32 tithing
- Deut. 5:6 exodus, reminder by God that God delivered them
 11:8-21 commandment re: grazing
 14:28-29 tithe for Levites, poor, etc.
 *15:7-11 giving to the poor in the land
 26:12-15 same as 14:28-29
- Ruth 2 Boaz and Ruth
- I Sam. 2:2-8 Lord is Holy, humbles the mighty, lifts the weak
- II Sam. 12 David and Nathan (esp. 1-6f.)
- *I K Jezebel and Ahab take Naboth's land
- Ps. *10 (esp. 1-4f) arrogant pursue the poor, forget God
 12:5 God will help the poor
 24 the earth is the Lord's
 72:1-4 petitions God to make the King just to the poor
 104:14 food from the earth
 132:15 God will satisfy the poor
 *146 (esp. 5-9) God defends the weak
- Prov. *14:31 good to be kind to the needy, equals honoring God
 15:16 better to be poor and humble than rich and troubled
 19:17 being kind to the poor equals lending to God

- Isa. *1:10-17, 21-26 running after money, forgetting the weak
 *5:8-11 adding field to field
 6:1-8 Isaiah's call
 **10 (esp. 1-15) woe to those who oppress, who are haughty
 25:4 Lord a defender of the weak and poor
 29:19 poor shall exult
 *58:3-7, 8-14 the fast that God chooses...let the oppressed go free
 *61:1-2 proclamation of the Year of the Lord
- Jer. *5:26-29 wicked oppress others
 7:5-7 amend your ways, help the needy
 31:31-34 change of heart, God's new covenant
- Ezek. 34:3-17 setting free the slaves every six years
 36:22ff. a new heart
- Hos. 8:7 they sow the wind, they shall reap the whirlwind
- Amos *2:6-7 sell the righteous for silver, etc.
 4:1 against oppression of the poor
 *5:10-15, 21-24 stop oppression, let justice roll down...
 6:1-7 powerful shall pass away
 *8:4-6 oppression and seeking after money
 9:8 God will destroy Israel from the "surface of the ground"
- Mic. 2:1-5ff on coveting and taking others' fields
 3 lovers of injustice shall be destroyed
- Zech. 7:8-14 God destroyed landowners hardened to justice
- Matt. 4:1-17 Jesus' temptations
 *5:7 Sermon on the Mount
 *5:3 poor in spirit
 6:19-21, 25ff. treasures on earth, lilies of the field
 18:15-18, 19-20 reconciliation, Jesus with two or more
 25:31-46 Jesus as Judge, as you did it to the least of these
- Luke 1:46-53 Magnificat (same as I Sam 2:1-10)
 *4:18-19 Jesus opens his ministry, quotes Isa. 61:1-2
 6:20-25 beatitudes and woes, Sermon on the Plain
 12:22-31 do not be anxious about clothes, etc.
 14:12-14 banquets not for friends, but for poor, weak, etc.
- John 20:15-19 "Feed my sheep"
- Acts 2:44-45 new community, eating together
 4:32-37 common worship
 5:1-11 Ananias and Sapphira betray common life and die
- I Cor. *1:26-29 God's versus the world's standards
- II Cor. 3:2-6 Spirit of God writes on our hearts
 8:9, 1-4 Jesus became poor, relief of the saints
 9:6-11 sow bountifully, reap bountifully

Gal. 6:14 Paul glories in the cross of Jesus

Eph. 2:13-14ff. breaking down the dividing wall of hostility
6:12 (10-20) contending against the earth's powers

Heb. 13:6 Lord is my helper, I will not fear

Jas. 2:1-7, 14-17 honor the poor, feed the hungry
5:1-5 woe to the rich who defraud the poor of wages

I Jn. 3:17-18 against closing one's heart to the poor

*texts with particular pertinence to the topic of this work

APPENDIX B

BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH AND MINISTERIAL COMMUNICATION*

1. Relate subject for communication to an important vital interest, remembering basic human motivations toward safety, loving relationships, status or esteem, and self-actualization.
2. Combine clarity, accuracy and adequacy, and vividness, avoiding the sins of barren scholarship, superficiality, triteness, rationalism.
3. Understand the psychological functions being performed by present attitudes and roots of resistance to change; supplement social education with personality growth.
4. Establish credibility and trust, stressing pastoral relationships and excellence of leadership along with prophetic witness.
5. Combine personal acceptance with confrontation.
6. Stand far enough ahead to demand understanding and attention, though not so far as to immobilize with unmanageable threat.
7. Quickly move to the concrete and specific, remembering that generalizations tend to confirm existing attitudes because of selective attention, interpretation and recall.
8. On important, controversial matters, ordinarily use two-sided presentations, including explicit statements of one's own position and a continuing process of analysis which nurtures consensus.
9. Encourage participation and dialogues, knowing that we support what we have helped to plan.
10. Strengthen communication with support communities, nurturing the individuals through their reference groups.
11. Supplement study with action, remembering that behavior tends to alter belief and that verbalization has only limited power for change.
12. Emphasize super-ordinate goals on which there is widespread agreement; always keep clear the Christian basis for a position, never talking simply like a psychologist or social scientist.

*obtained from Dr. Harvey Seifert, Professor, School of Theology at Claremont, 1975. Author unknown.

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